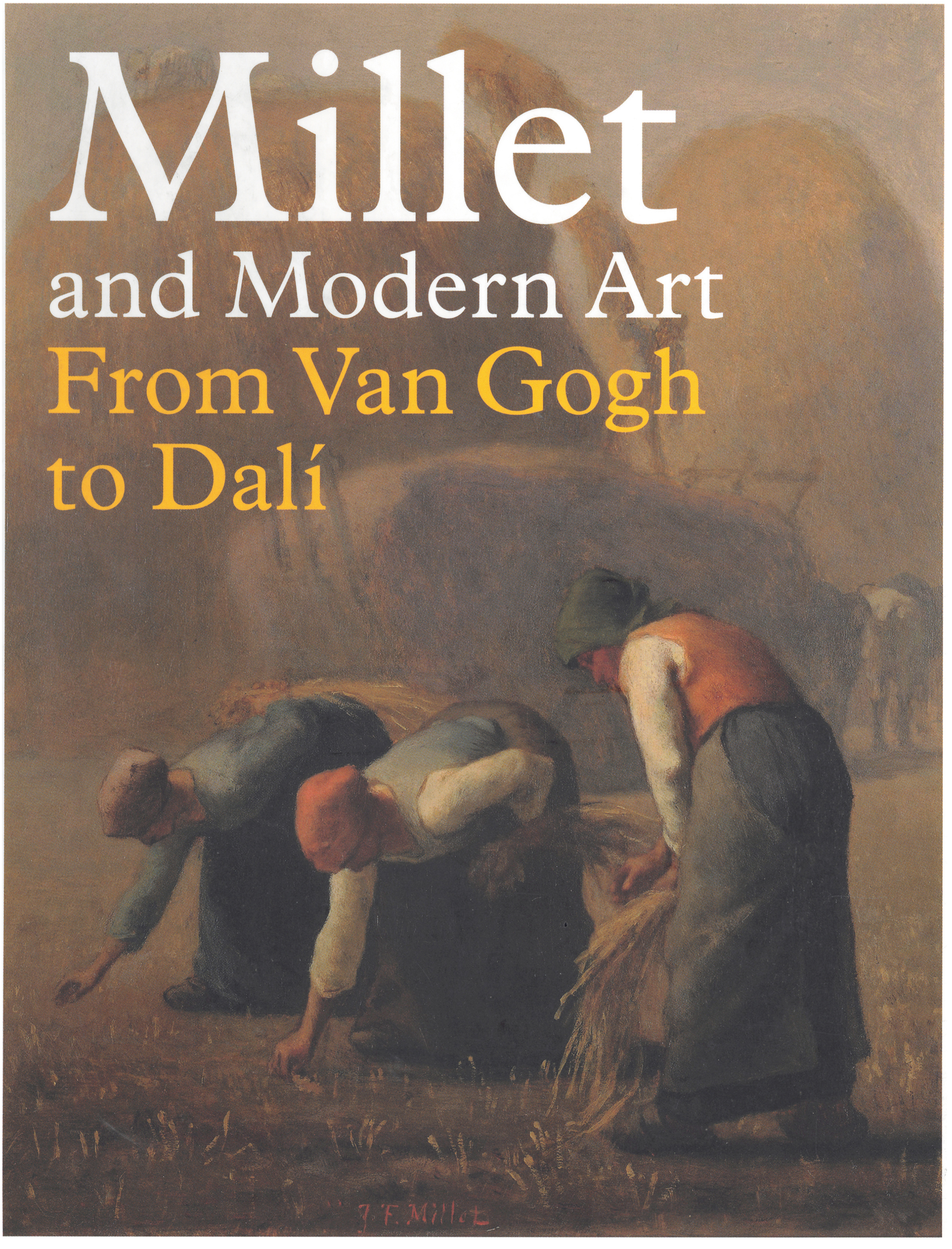
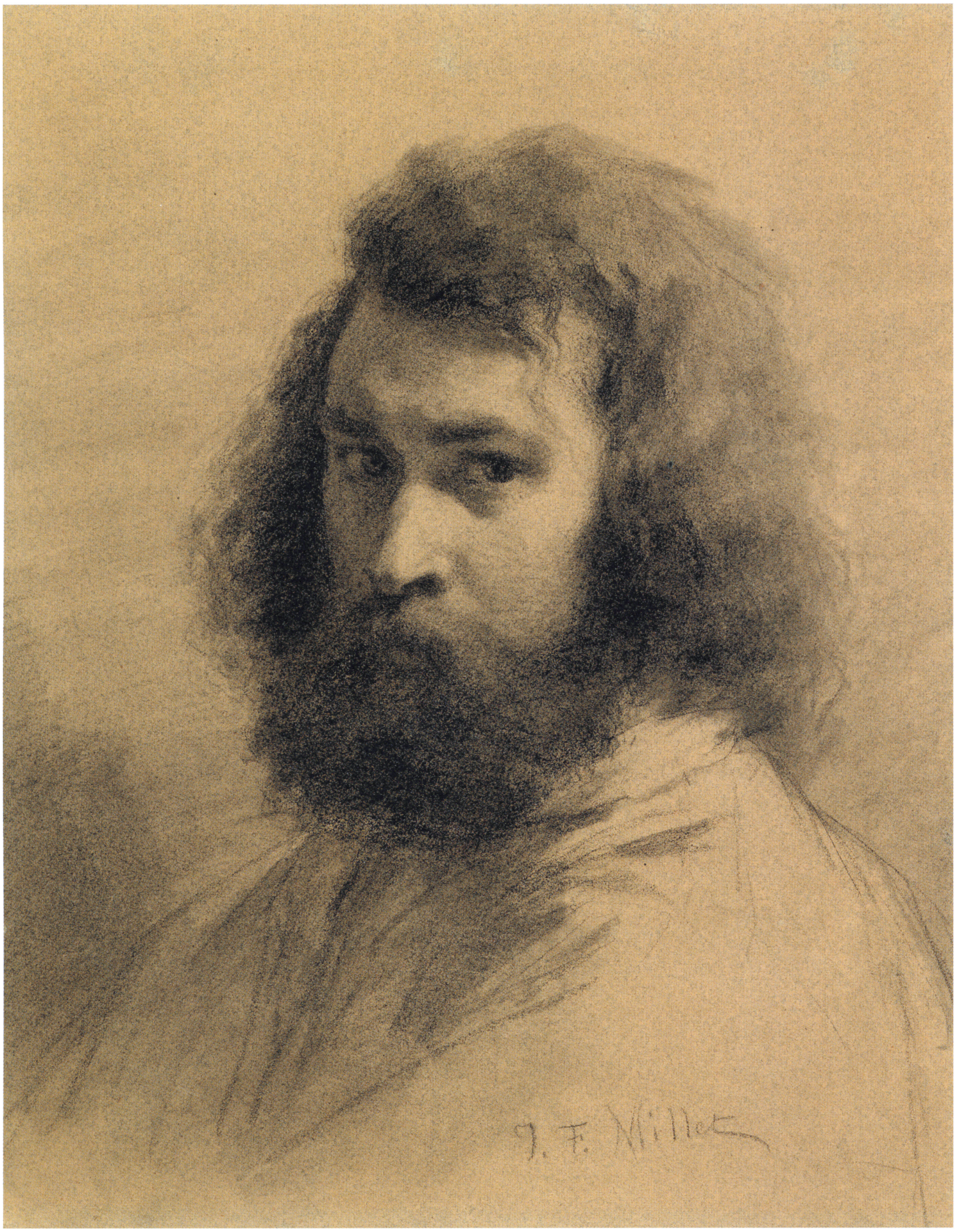
Millet
and Modern Art
From Van Gogh to Dalí



Millet and Modern Art



1
Jean-François Millet
Self-Portrait, c. 1847–49
Black chalk on paper, 54.5 × 43 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the
Musée du Louvre, Paris (gift by
Mrs. Joanny Benoît Peytel, 1914)

Millet
and Modern Art From Van Gogh to Dalí

Simon Kelly and Maite van Dijk (eds.)
Nienke Bakker and Abigail Yoder

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis
In association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London

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Back cover: Vincent van Gogh, *The Sower*, 1888 (121)

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Contents

6
Directors' Foreword
Adriaan Dönszelmann and Brent R. Benjamin

26
Introduction
Simon Kelly and Maite van Dijk

28
"This Artistic Fauve": Millet as Modern Artist
Simon Kelly

64
Millet and Impressionism
Simon Kelly

90
"That Great Poet": Millet and the Post-Impressionists
Abigail Yoder

116
Van Gogh and "Père Millet"
Nienke Bakker

138
Millet Worldwide: The Artist's Global Impact before 1900
Simon Kelly

160
Exalted and Monumental: Appreciation of Millet around 1900
Maite van Dijk

187
Notes
194
Bibliography
200
List of Exhibited Works
204
Index of Names
206
Photographic credits
206
Illustrations
207
About the Authors
207
Acknowledgments

Directors’ Foreword

The French artist Jean-François Millet is one of the most important painters of the Barbizon School. He is known chiefly for his poetic and sincere images of everyday peasant life, including the internationally known paintings *The Angelus* and *The Gleaners*. Rather than portray industrialization and urbanization as symbols of the modern era, Millet focused on harsh rural life, which he represented monumentally and with immense respect. His deep understanding of peasant existence and his radical painting and drawing techniques earned him praise in his own time, and also attracted considerable controversy.

Less well known is the immense impact Millet had on many generations of artists. Those who followed him appreciated not only his peasant themes but also his nudes and landscapes, which are perhaps not as familiar to us today. They admired Millet too for his anti-academic approach, inventive technique, and use of materials. Millet's reputation stretched from Europe to North America and Russia until well into the twentieth century, and he inspired artists including Vincent van Gogh, Georges Seurat, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, Winslow Homer, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Edvard Munch, and Salvador Dalí.

The paintings, drawings, and pastels in this catalogue and the exhibition it accompanies demonstrate how progressive Millet was for his time, and how important he was to many international avant-garde artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is the first exhibition to focus explicitly on the international influence exerted by the modernity of Millet's work.

The Van Gogh Museum and the Saint Louis Art Museum are delighted to have had the opportunity to dedicate an exhibition and a book to this subject for the first time. The initial idea came from Vivien Greene, Senior Curator of 19th- and Early 20th-Century Art at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, who invited Simon Kelly, Curator and Head of Department of Modern and Contemporary Art in St. Louis, to co-chair a session, *Modernizing Millet*, at the 2010 College Art Association conference in Chicago. With Greene's support, Kelly subsequently approached the Van Gogh Museum, which immediately embraced the idea. He and Maite van Dijk, Senior Curator, then developed the exhibition together and saw through the production of this book. Their essays, along with further texts by Abigail Yoder and Nienke Bakker, offer fresh insights into Millet's oeuvre and reputation.

We warmly thank the many international lenders, particularly the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, for their exceptional generosity. The exhibition is presented with exceptional support from the Musée d'Orsay. In St. Louis, additional support is provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Van Gogh Museum would like to express deep gratitude to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the corporate partners, the BankGiro Loterij, Van Lanschot, and ASML, for their support.

We hope that this book and exhibition will be a (re)discovery for many people of the remarkable and progressive work of Jean-François Millet, and will shed new light on the development of modern art.

Adriaan Dönszelmann
Managing Director and acting Director,
Van Gogh Museum

Brent R. Benjamin
The Barbara B. Taylor Director,
Saint Louis Art Museum

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The directors and curators are extremely grateful for the generous support of the museums, galleries and collectors, as well as those lenders who wished to remain anonymous.

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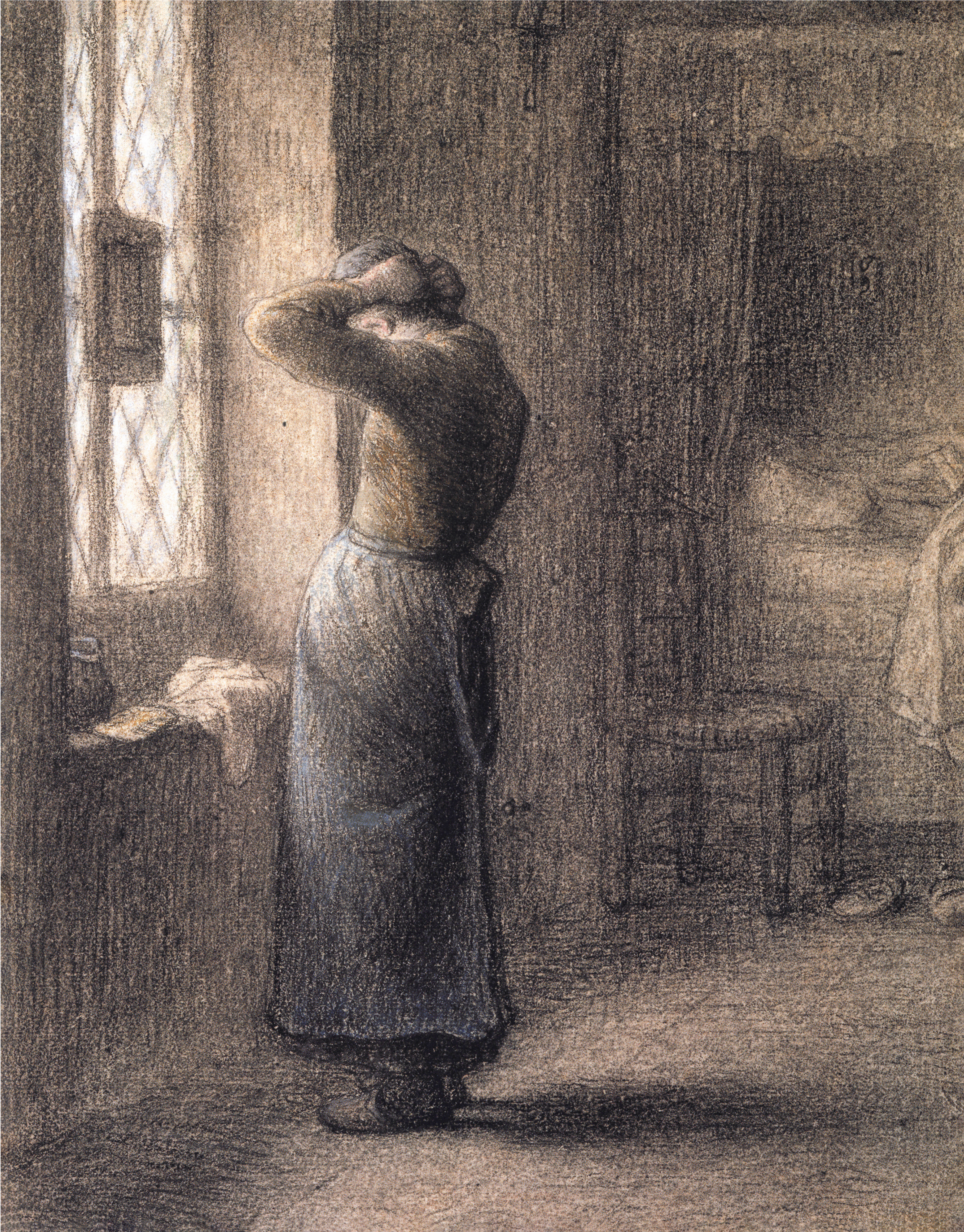

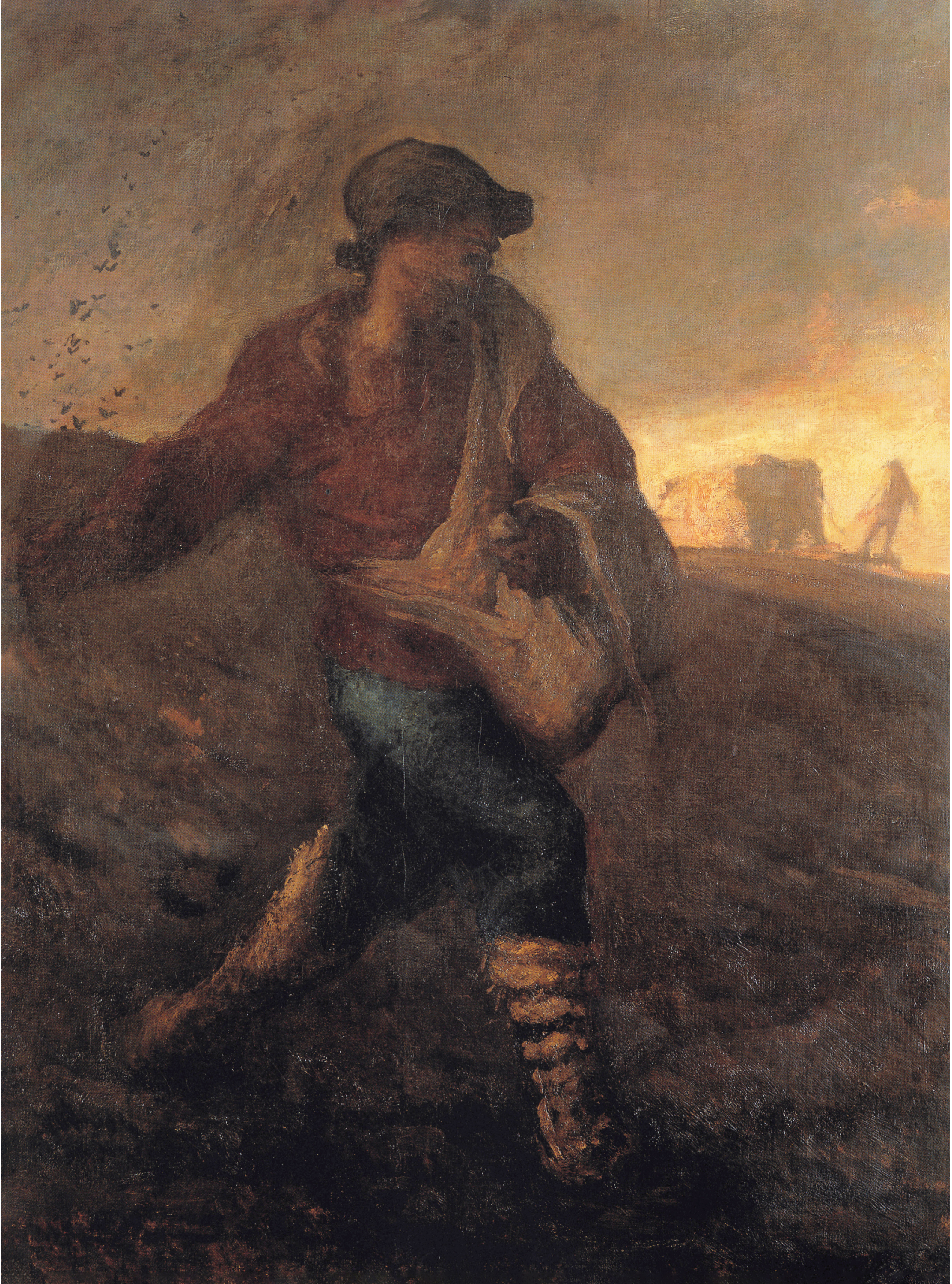

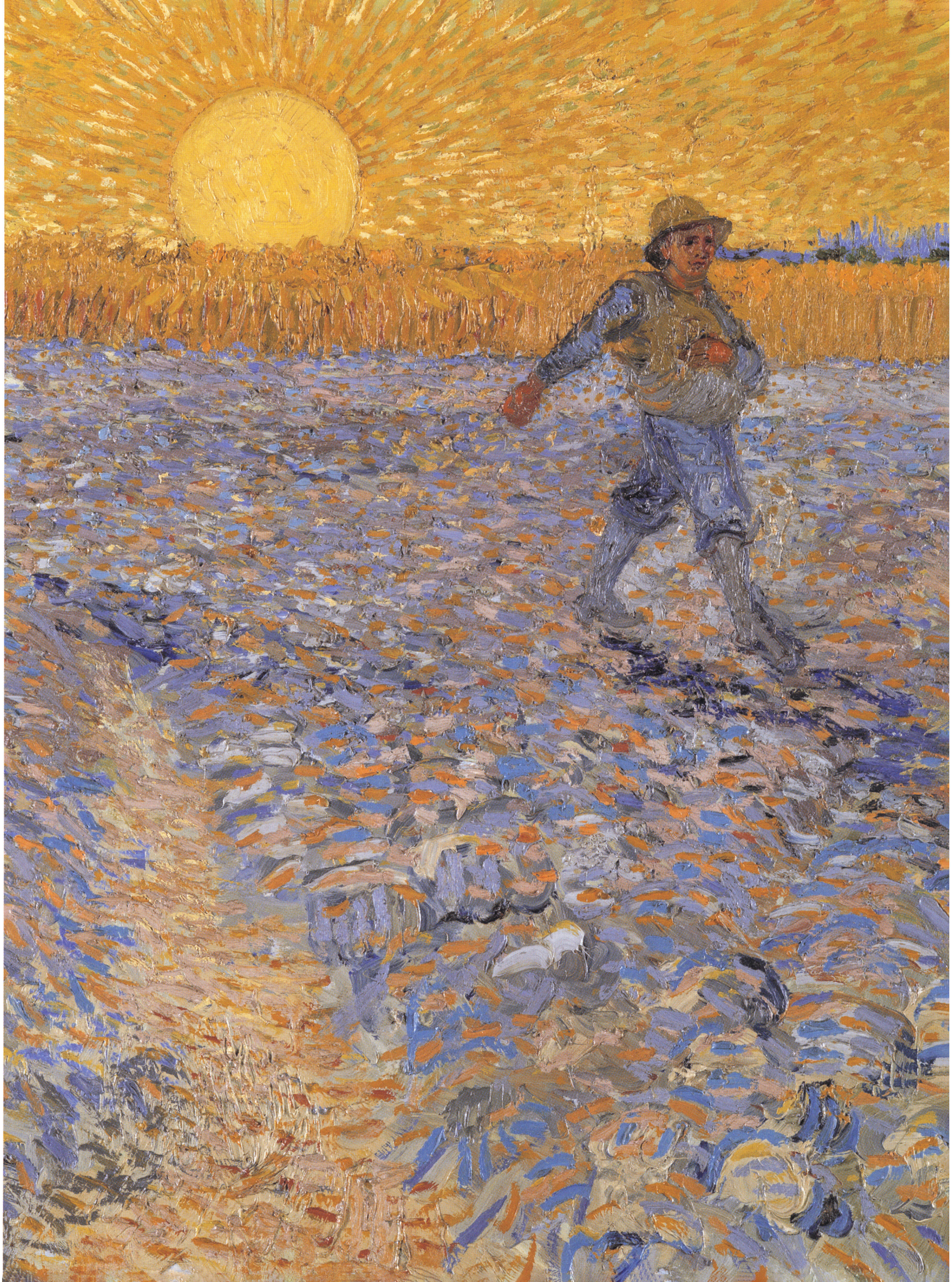

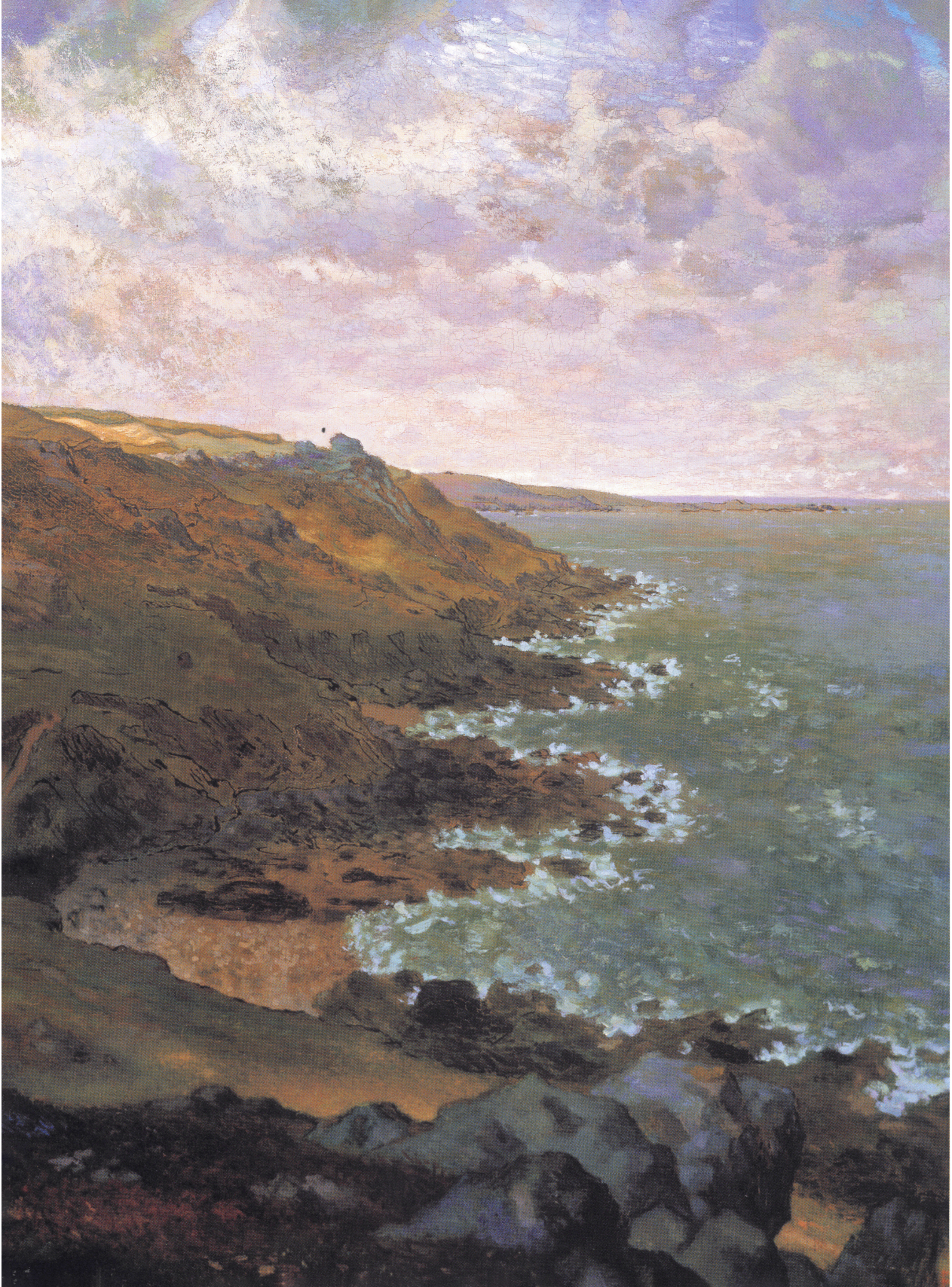

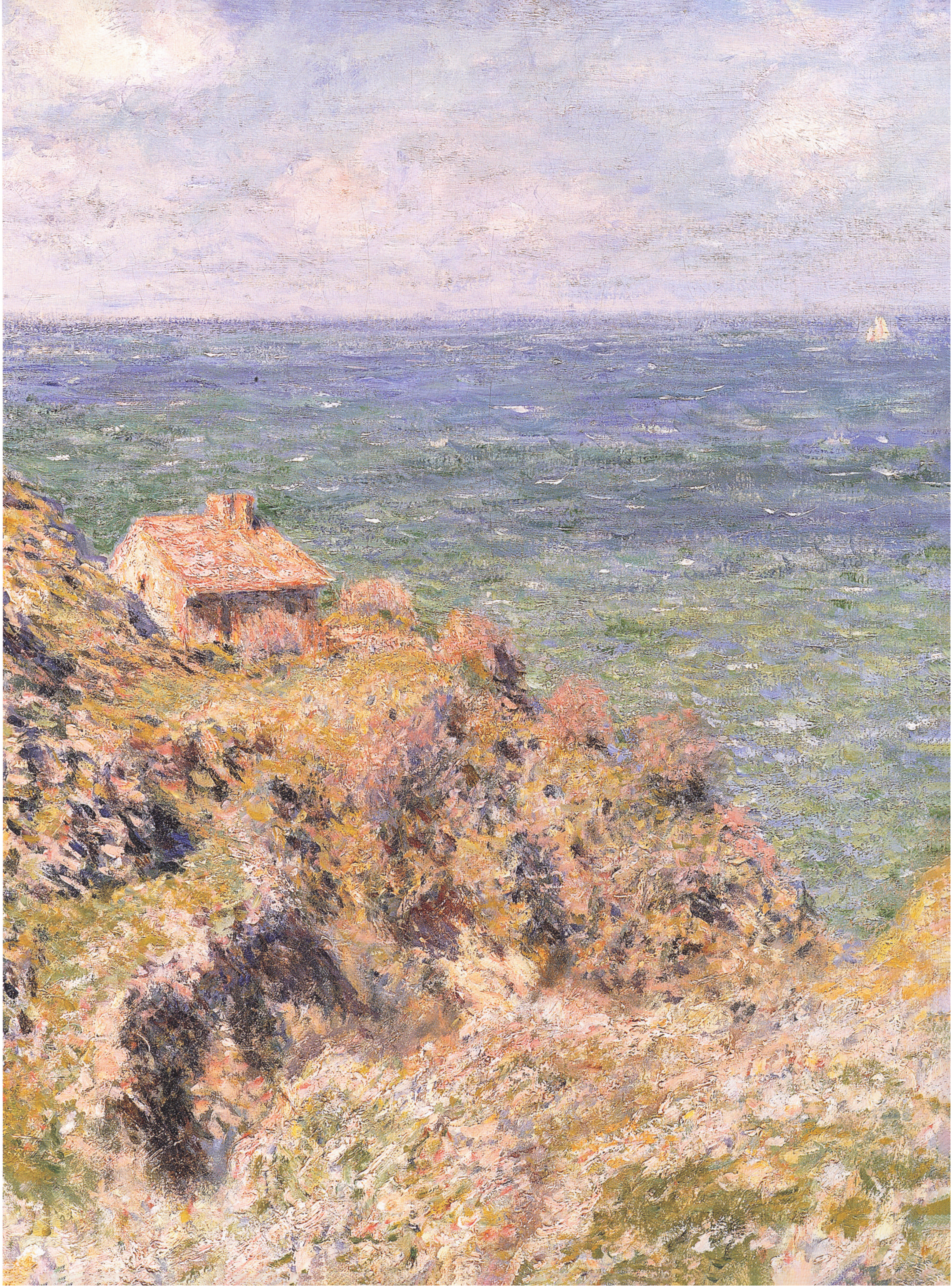

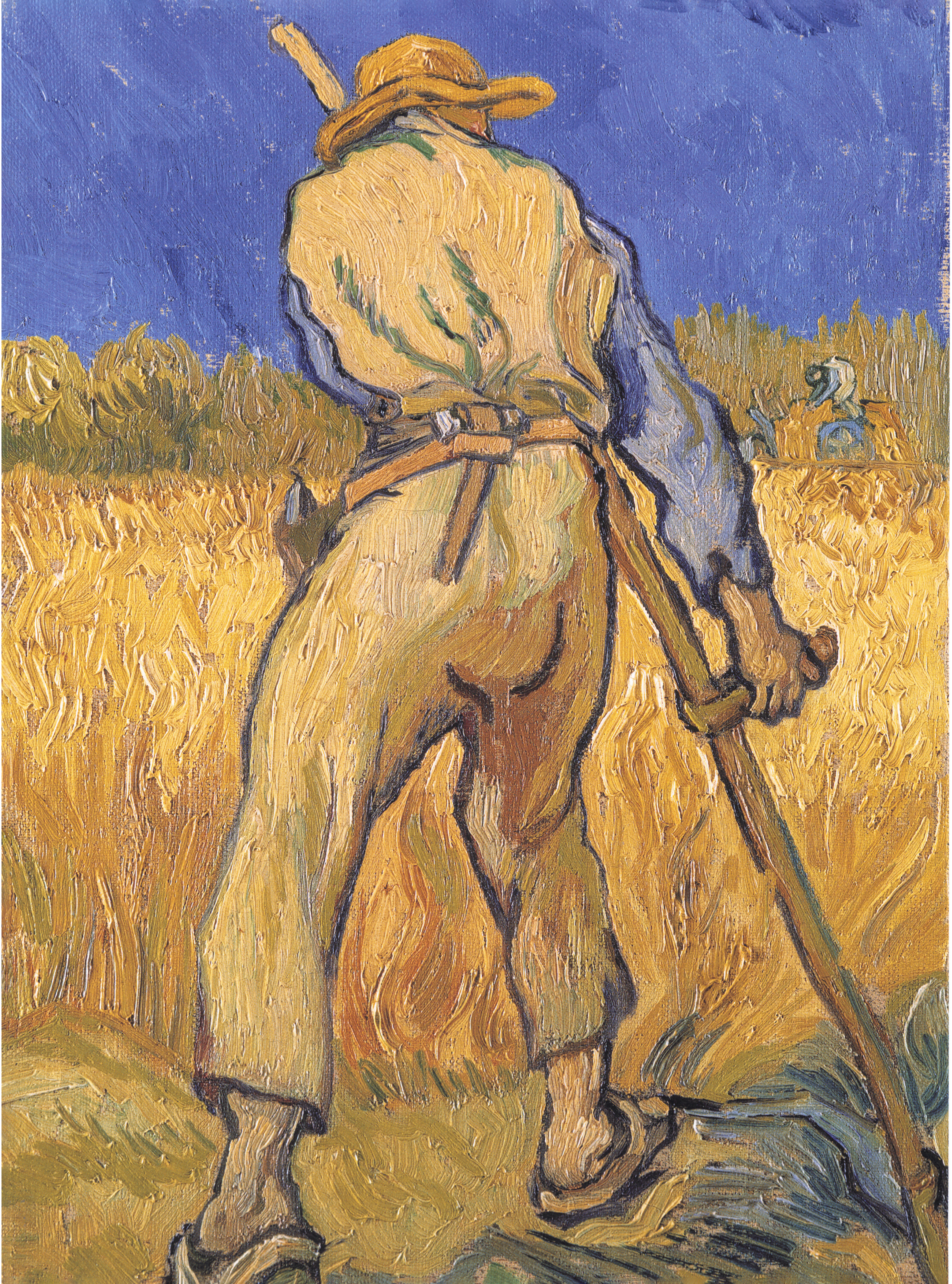

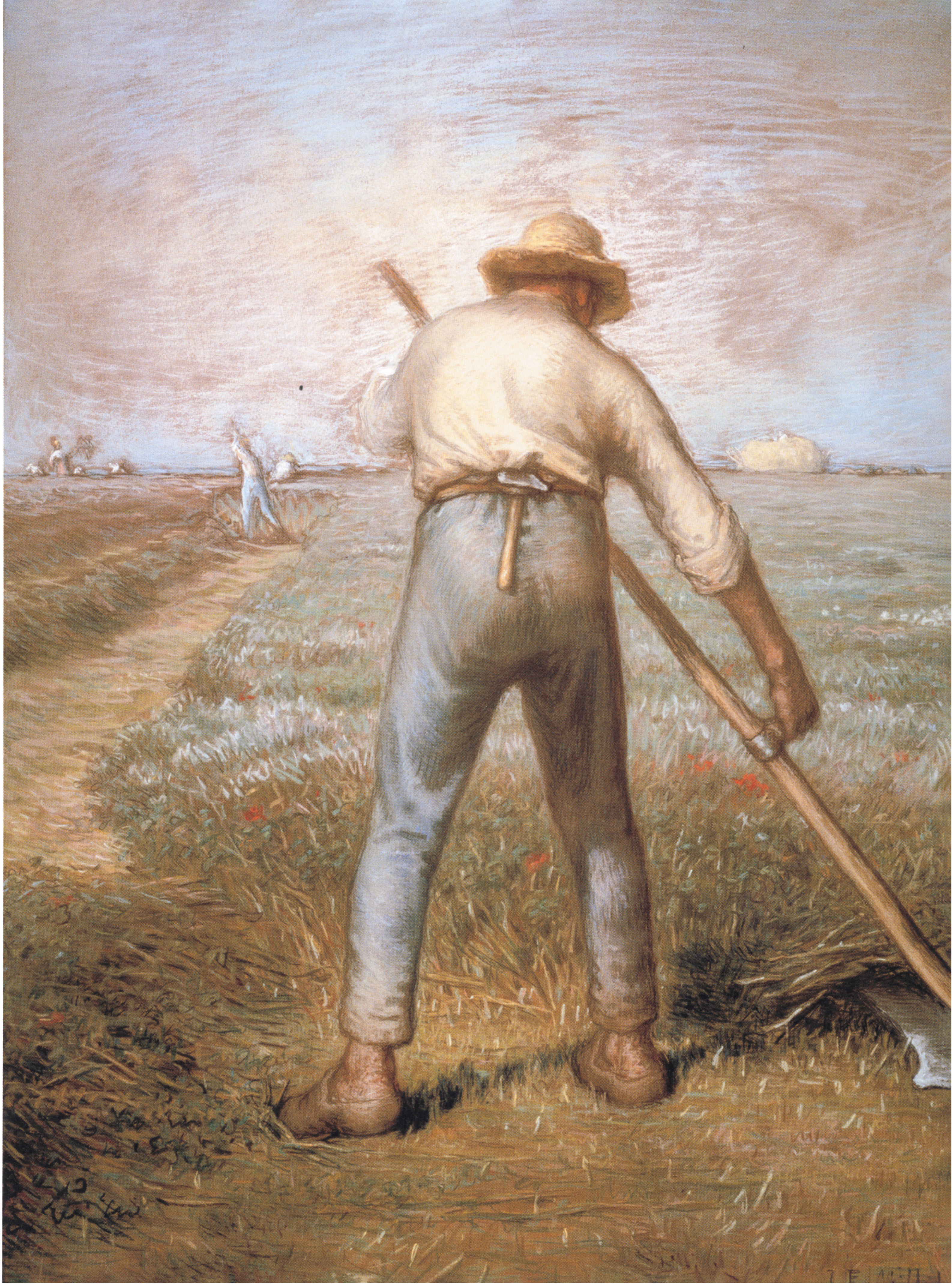

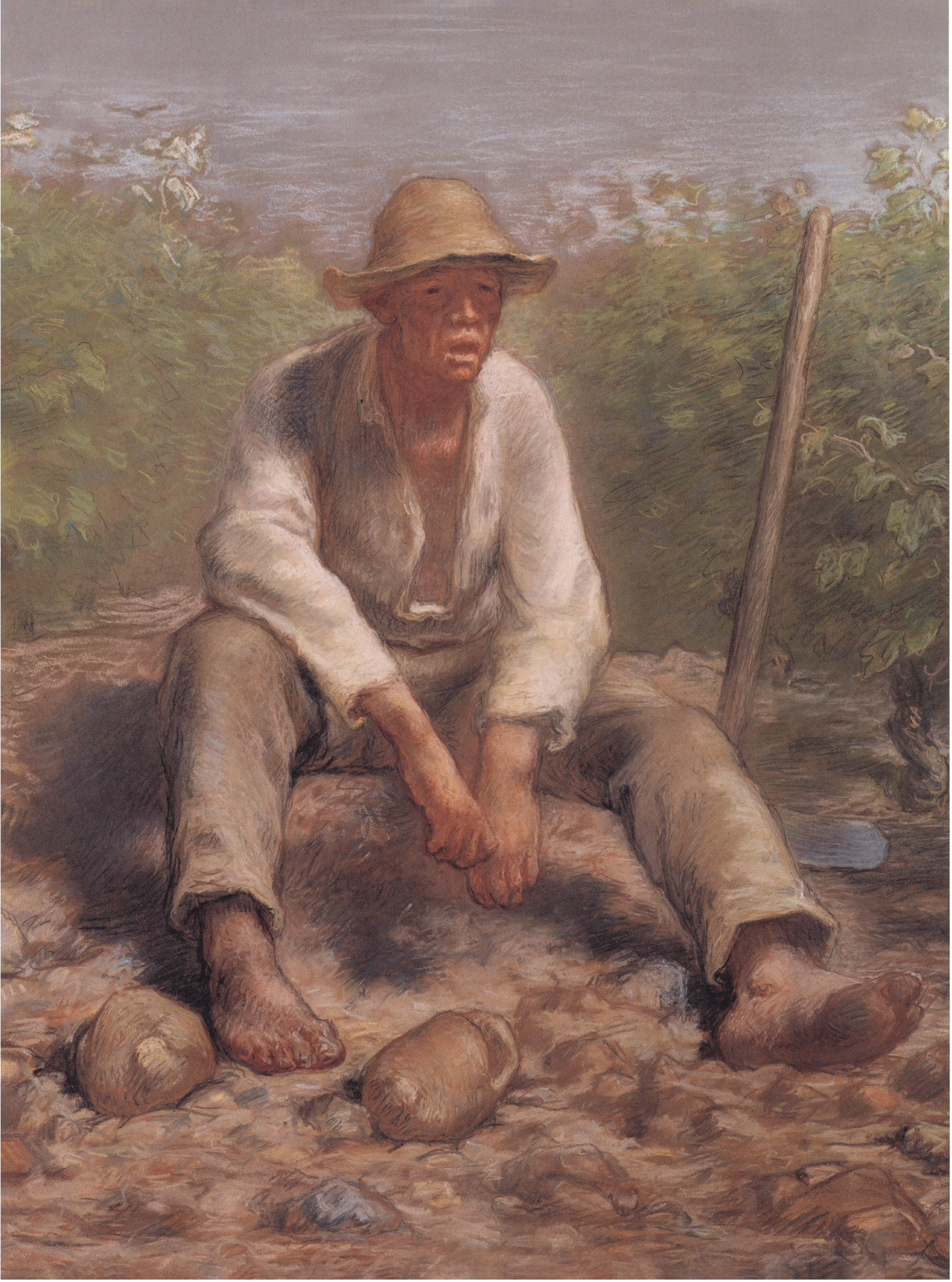

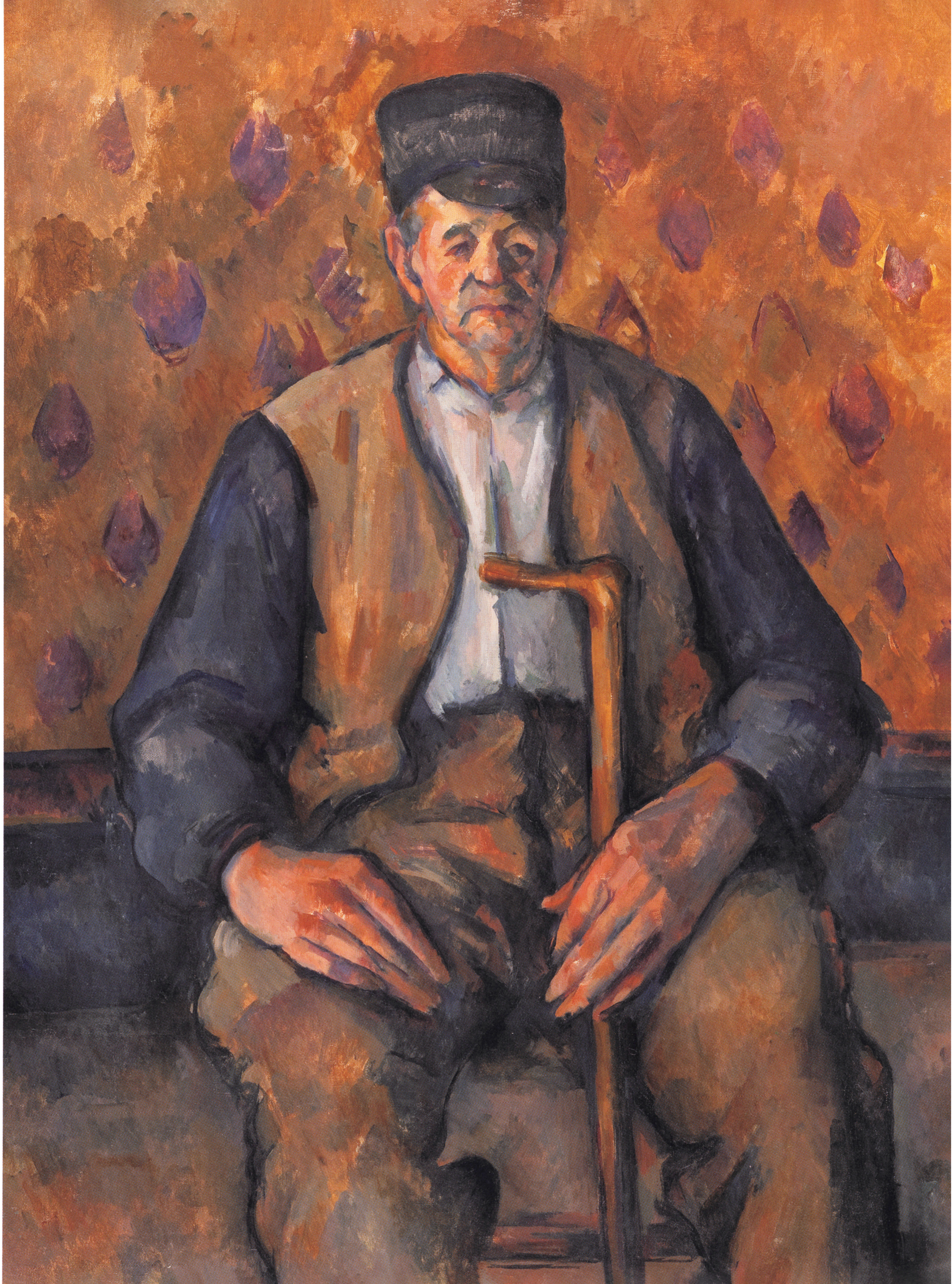

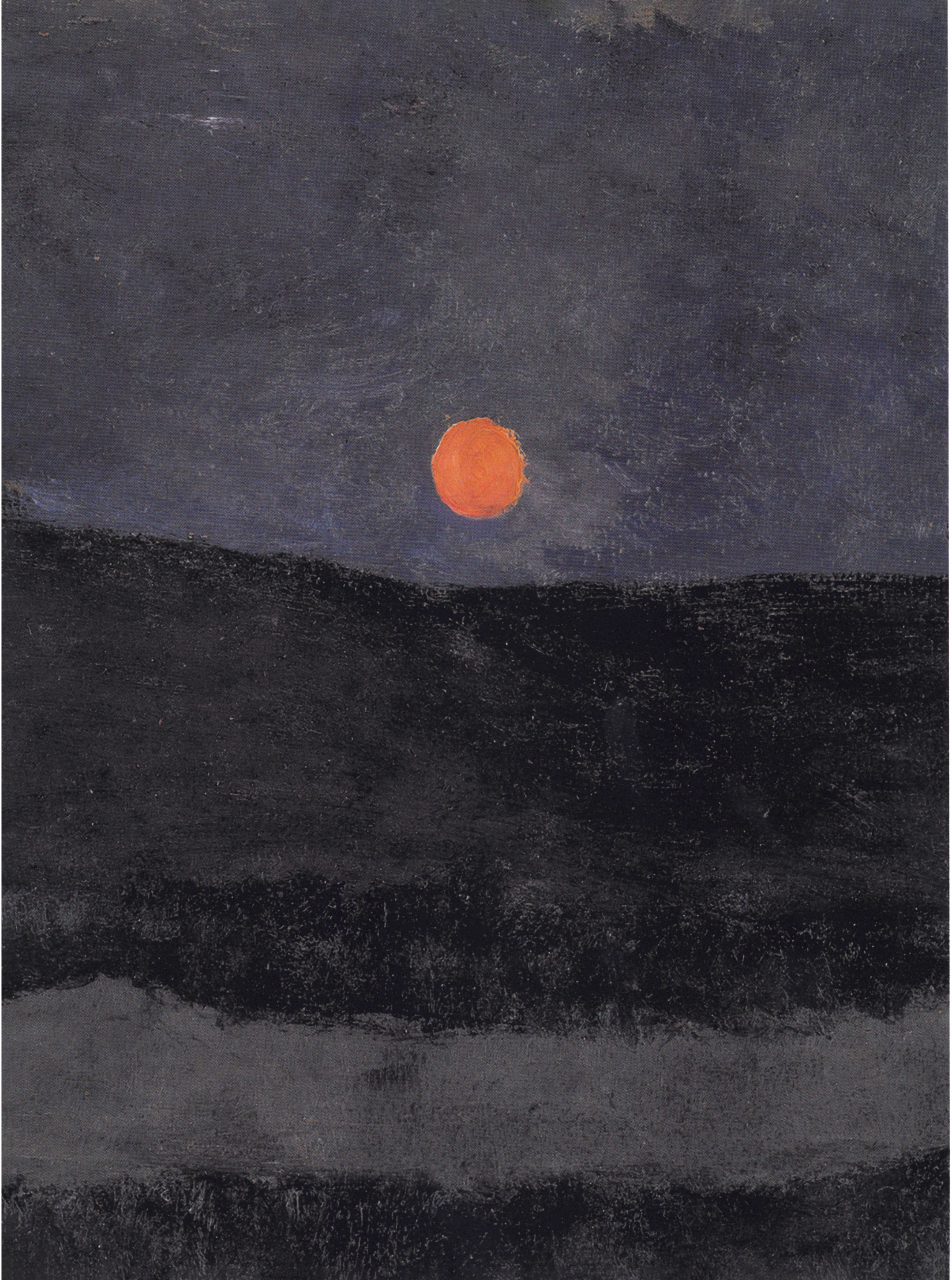

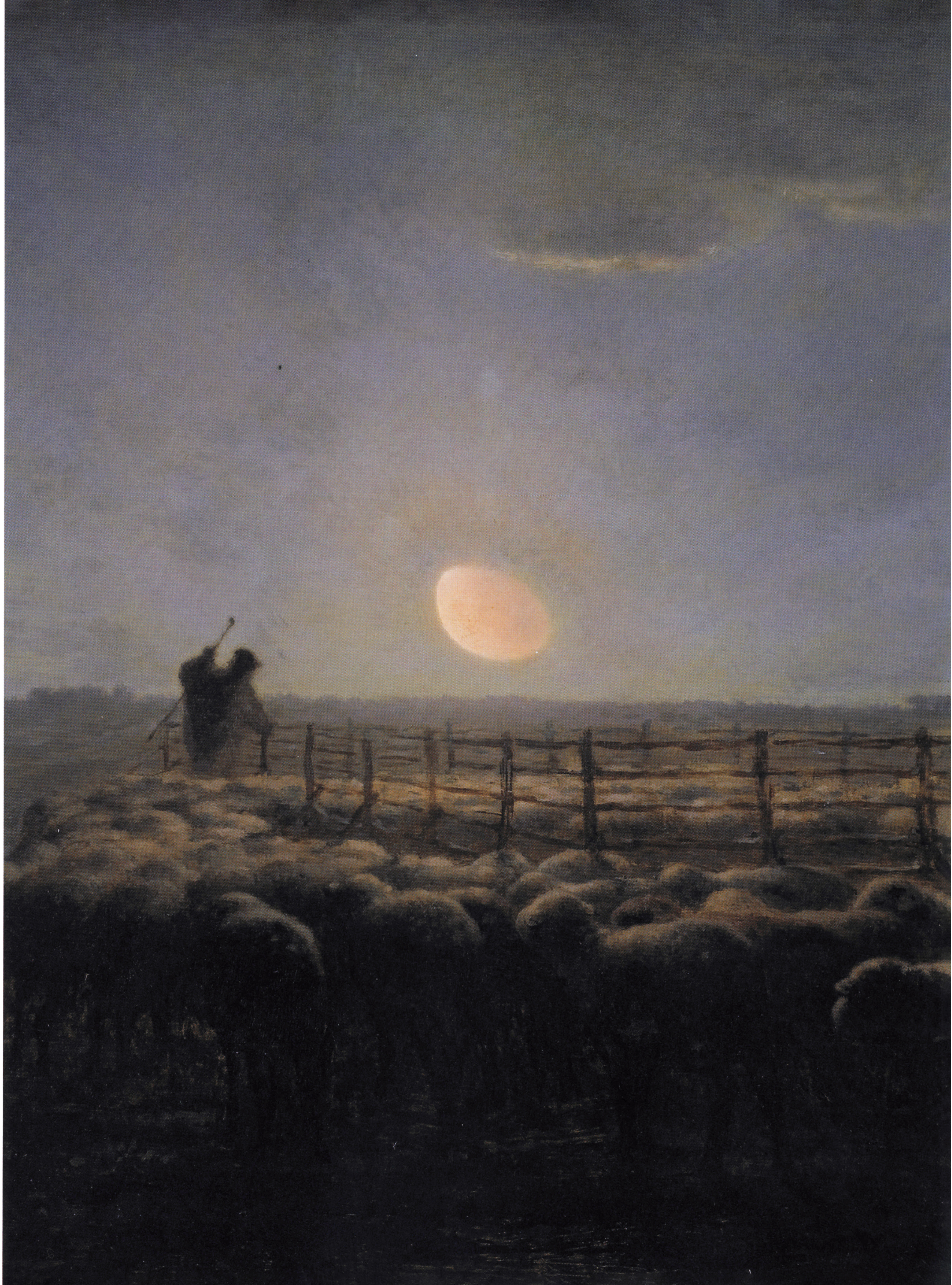

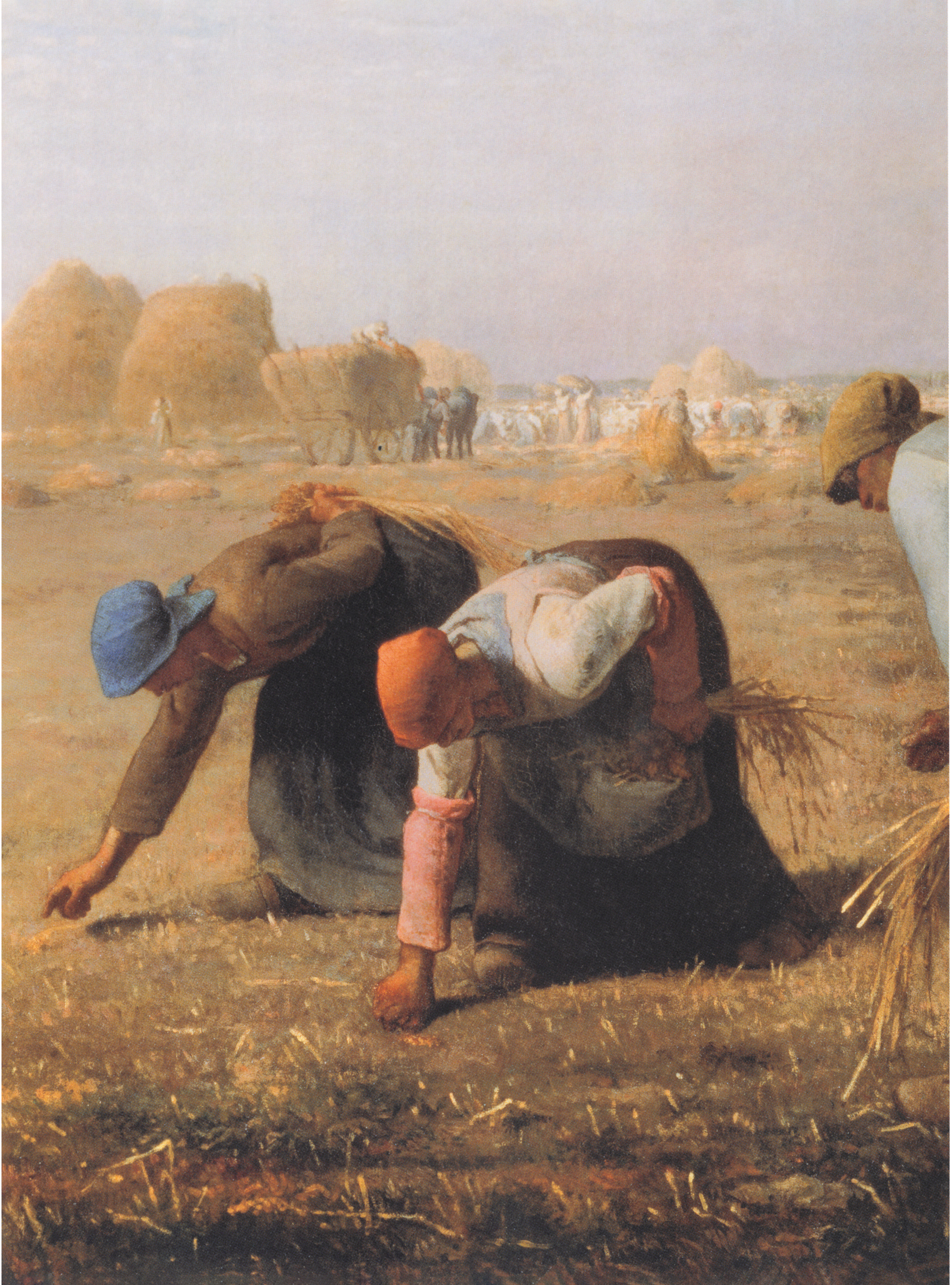

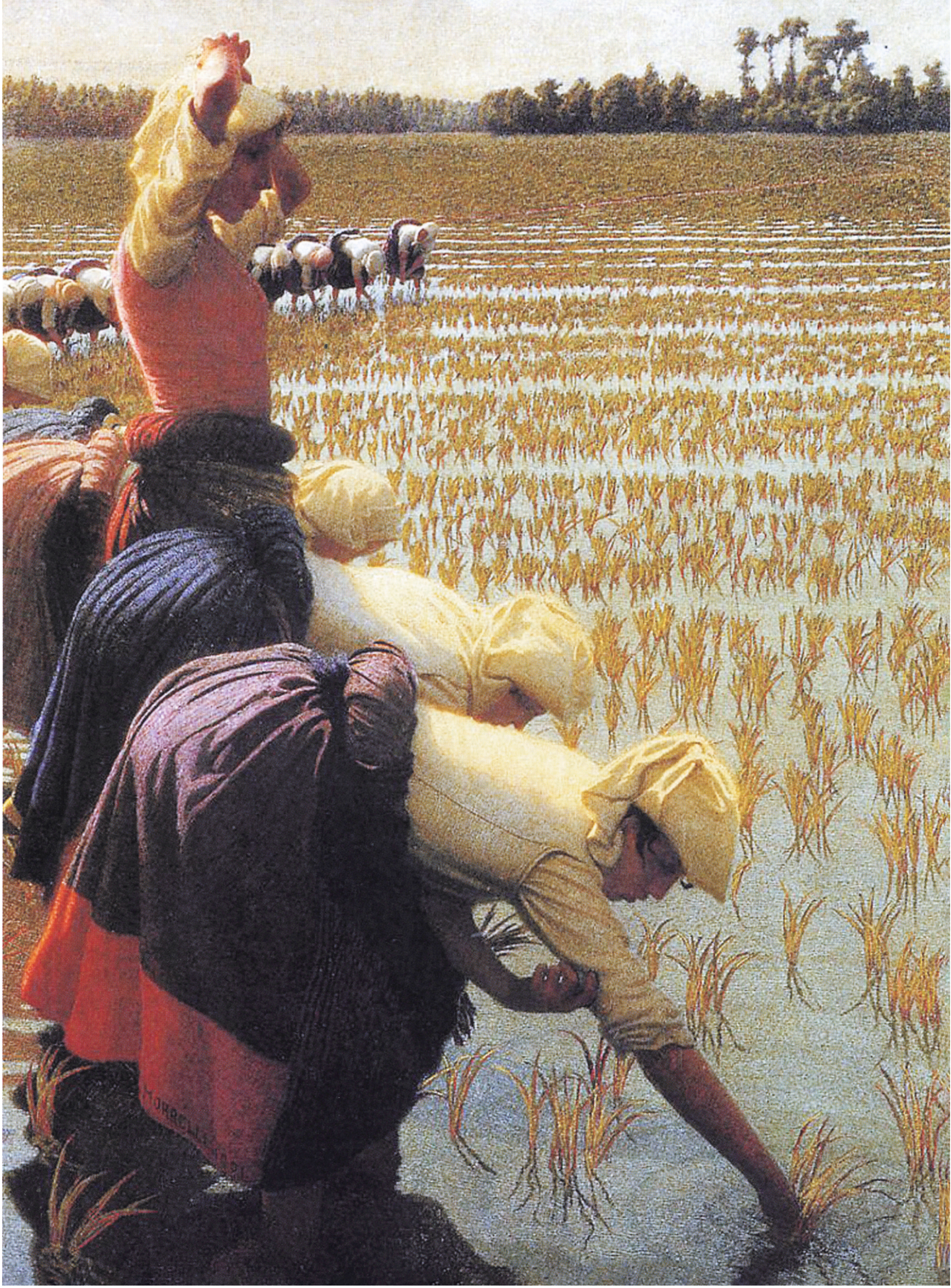
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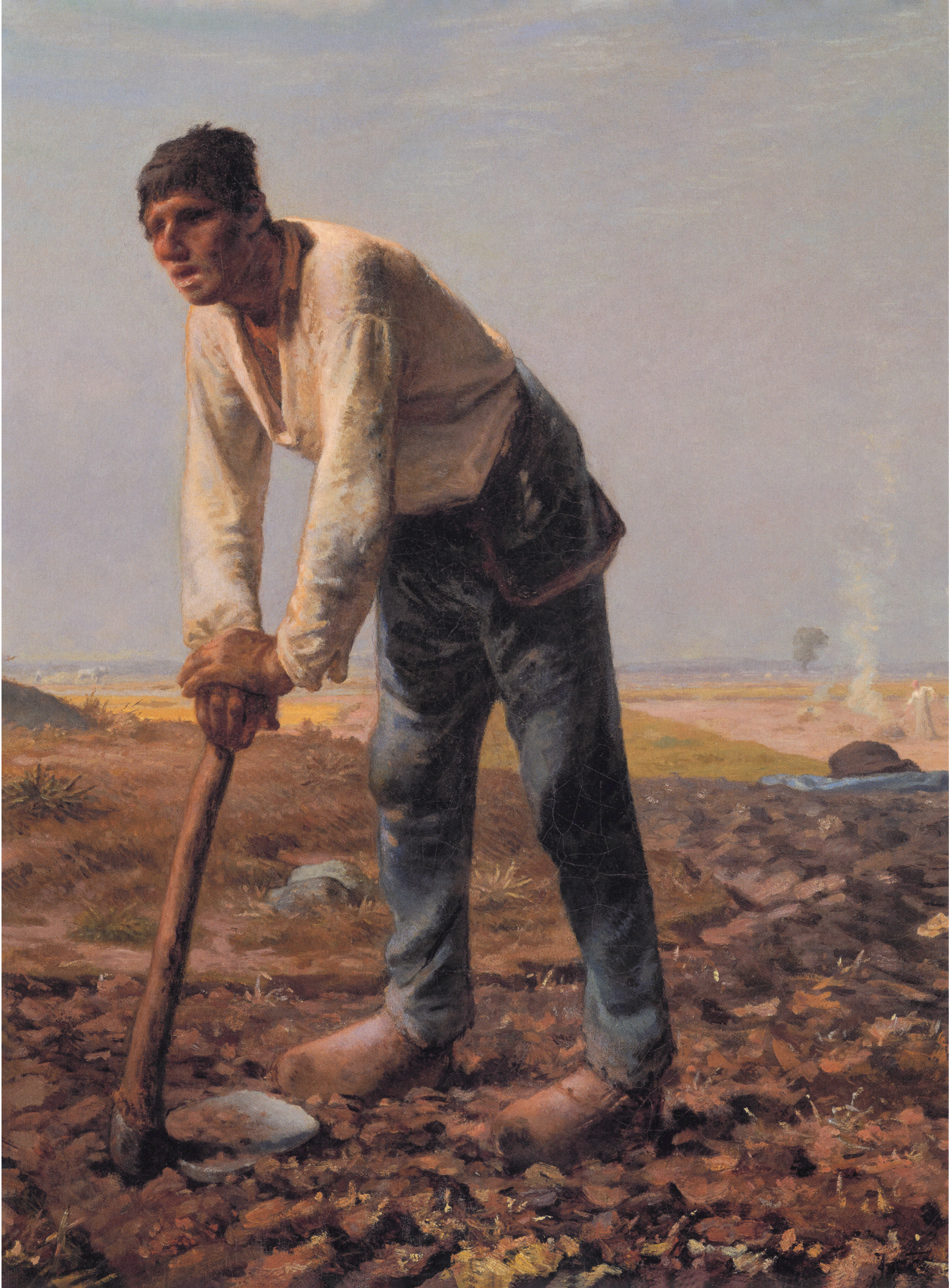
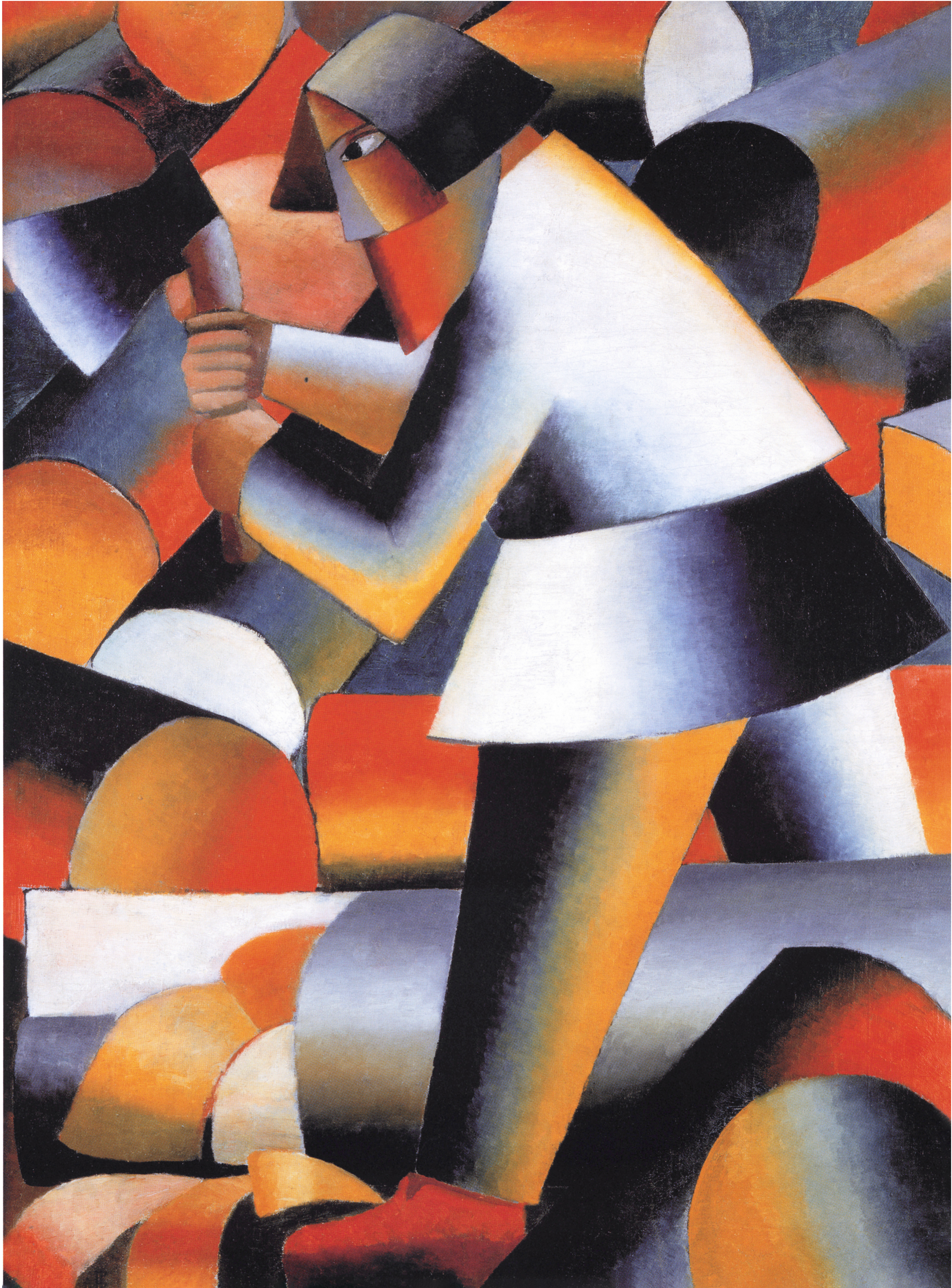
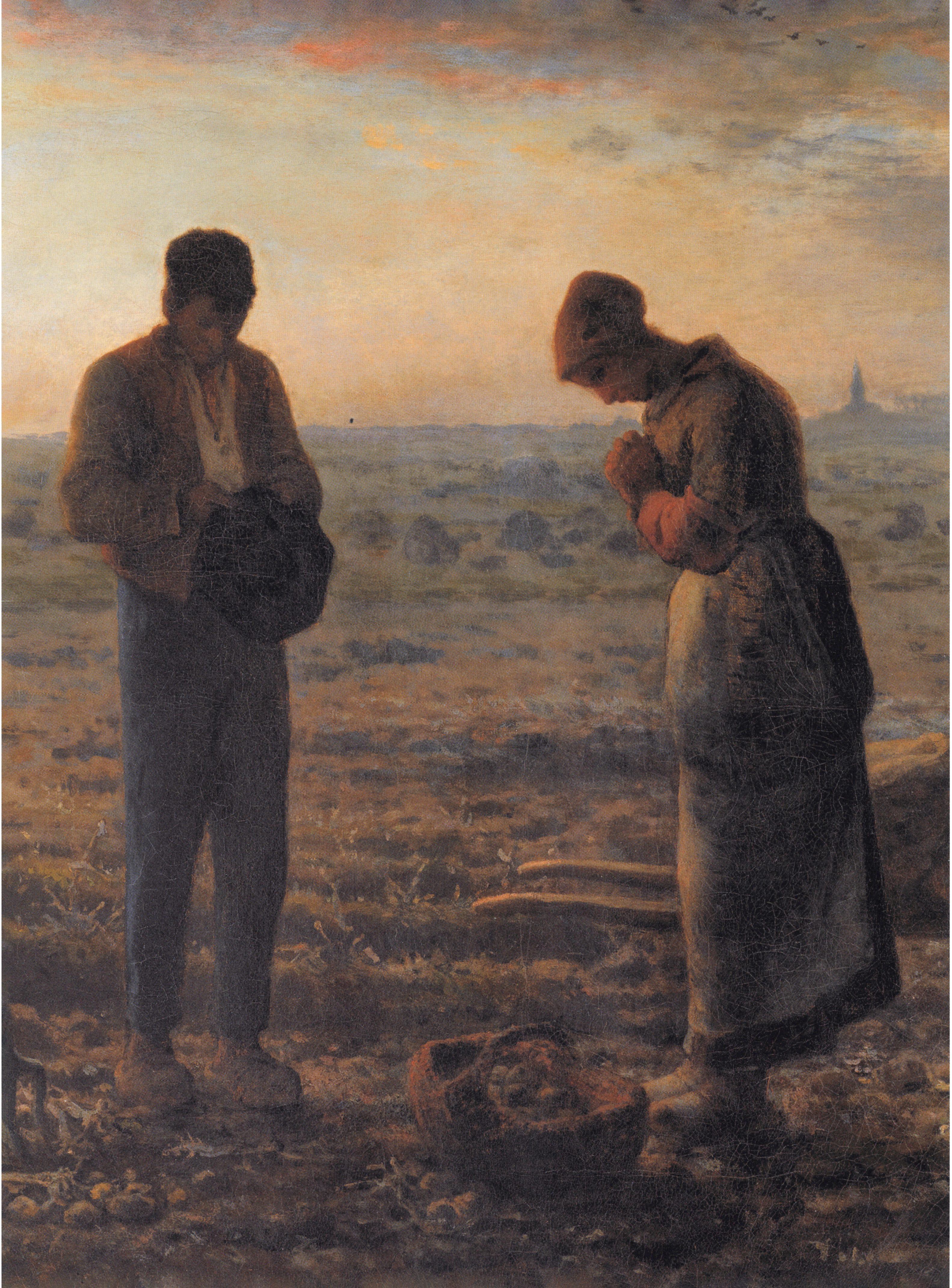
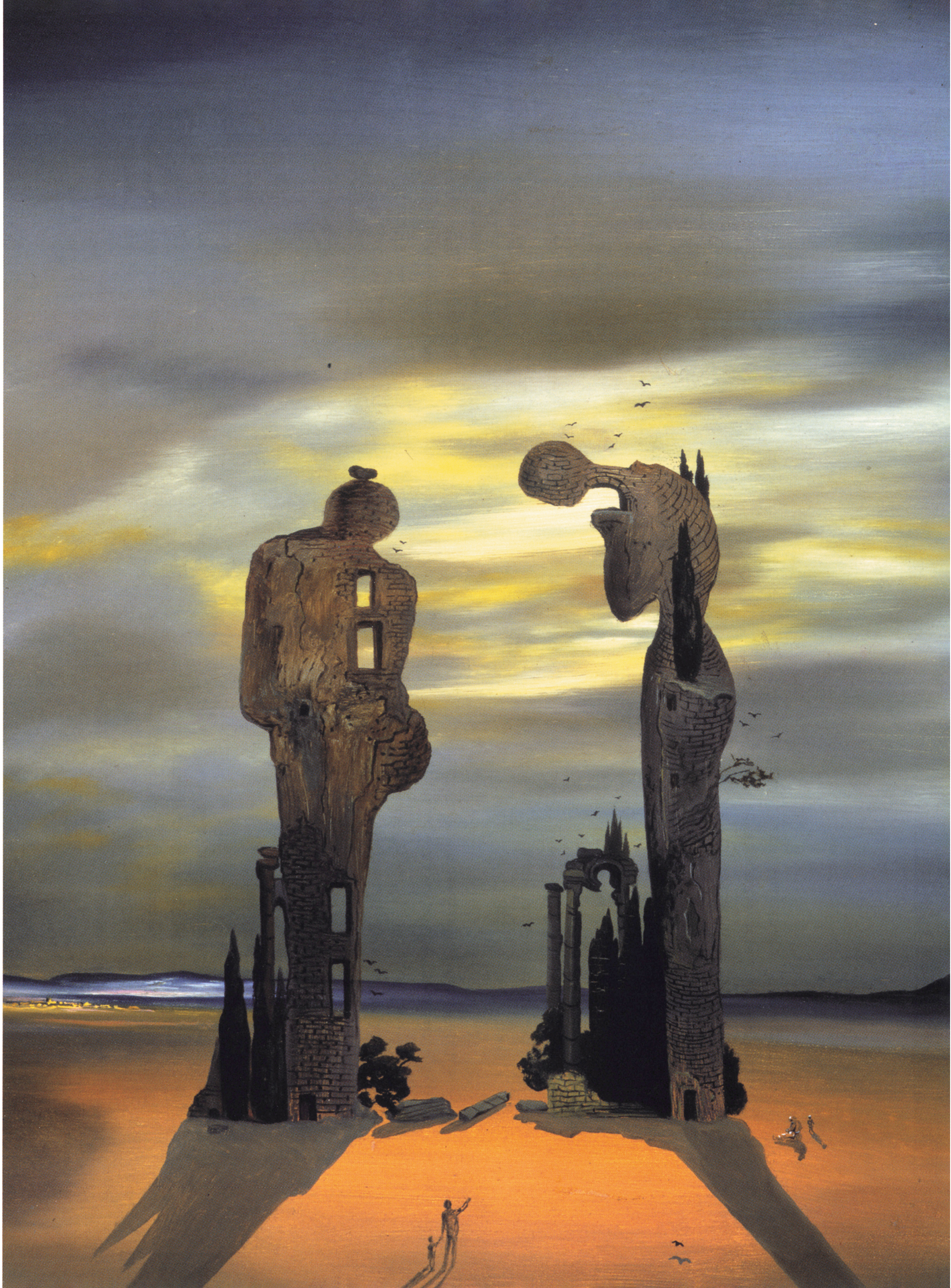








Introduction

Around February 3, 1884, Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo, "To me, Millet, not Manet, is that essential modern painter who opened the horizon to many."[1] His words spoke to the perception, even in the 1880s, that modern art originated with the work of Édouard Manet. In later decades, critics, most notably Clement Greenberg, would endorse this position, presenting Manet as the father of a modernist narrative that developed art from the idea of a window on to three-dimensional space to a two-dimensional abstract pattern.[2] Van Gogh's words, however, provocatively suggested that there was an alternative modern art tradition that originated in the work of the leading Barbizon School painter Jean-François Millet (1814–1875). The exhibition and publication aims to explore this tradition for the first time, examining the wide international diversity of avant-garde artists who were influenced by Millet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[3] These range from Van Gogh, who had seen Millet's work in person by 1875, the year of the French artist's death, to Salvador Dalí, who became fascinated by the artist's output in the 1930s.[4]

Millet's work offered a rural counterpoint to Manet's urban modernism. The peasantry was, indeed, a key subject in European modernism from 1875 to 1914, emanating largely from Millet's example.[5] As Van Gogh again noted, the subject of the peasant, "with Millet in the van as the eternal master," was "the very heart of modern art."[6] As we shall see, Millet's work impacted later artists for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from its inventive compositions and use of color to its perceived spiritual or political content. By the late nineteenth century, Millet was arguably the best-known modern artist in the world. His work was widely reproduced and statues were erected in his honor.[7] His biography was written by several authors in various languages, and his work sold for enormous amounts on the art market.[8]

This exhibition does not claim that Millet was the first "modern" artist. Among Millet's peers, there have been many artists who have been associated with that title, including not only Manet but also Eugène Delacroix, Gustave Courbet, and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and the title has little real meaning.[9] Rather, the show foregrounds the often overlooked role of Millet in the rise of a type of inventive and innovative modern art, generally understood to be "avant-garde."[10] Our exhibition is, of course, not exhaustive in its scope, and in establishing this aim we have self-consciously chosen not to focus on the significant naturalist tradition that developed out of Millet's work, evident in the work of artists from Jules Bastien-Lepage to George Clausen to Emile Claus. The first essay in the catalogue looks at the radical charge of Millet's work, examining his career as a way of understanding its importance for later generations. Subsequent essays explore Millet's impact on the Impressionists; the Post-Impressionists; Van Gogh; and a global range of avant-garde artists before and after 1900.

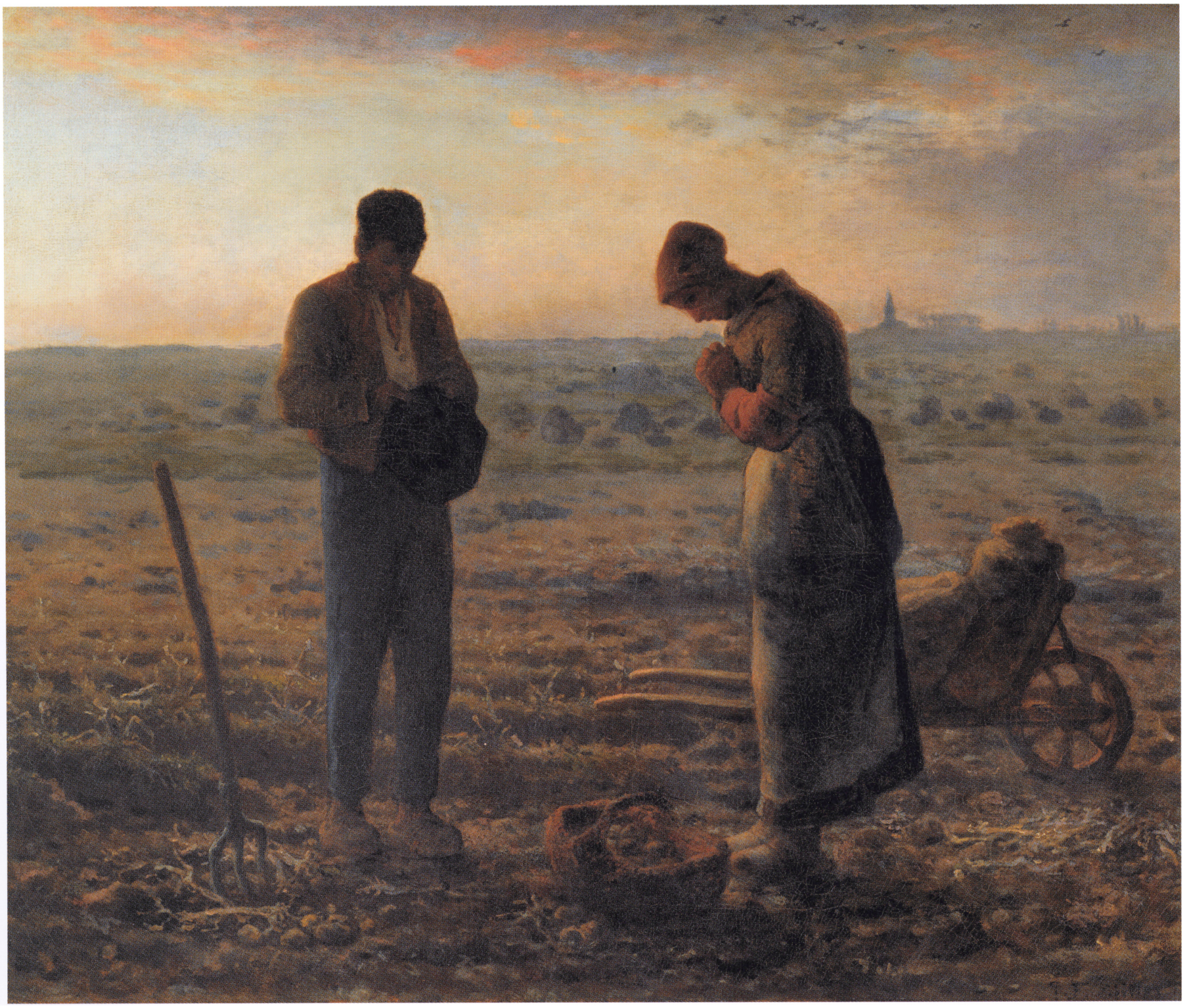
Millet's influence was particularly evident through certain motifs that appeared in some of his most widely disseminated works. Among these were key images of labor, like *The Sower* and *The Mower*, and repose, like *Harvesters Resting*. *The Gleaners* also became an iconic image and was extensively reproduced. Millet's most famed painting, however, was undoubtedly *The Angelus*, an image of two peasants at evening prayer in the fields. The exhibition also argues for Millet's lesser-known influence in the genres of the nude and landscape.

Those artists impacted by Millet developed their own, often very differing interpretations of his work, from Van Gogh's spiritual identification to Gauguin's formal interest, to Dalí's sexualized reading. Perhaps, after Van Gogh, it was Dalí who most obsessively engaged with Millet's work, returning to it repeatedly as inspiration. He described *The Angelus* as "the most troubling of pictorial works, the most enigmatic, the most dense, the richest in unconscious thoughts that had ever existed."[11] Later, in 1975, he visited Millet's birthplace at Gruchy in Normandy and was photographed in his fur coat, holding a cane and placing flowers in front of a statue of the artist (2). Dalí's example speaks to the enduring appeal of Millet's work into the twentieth century.

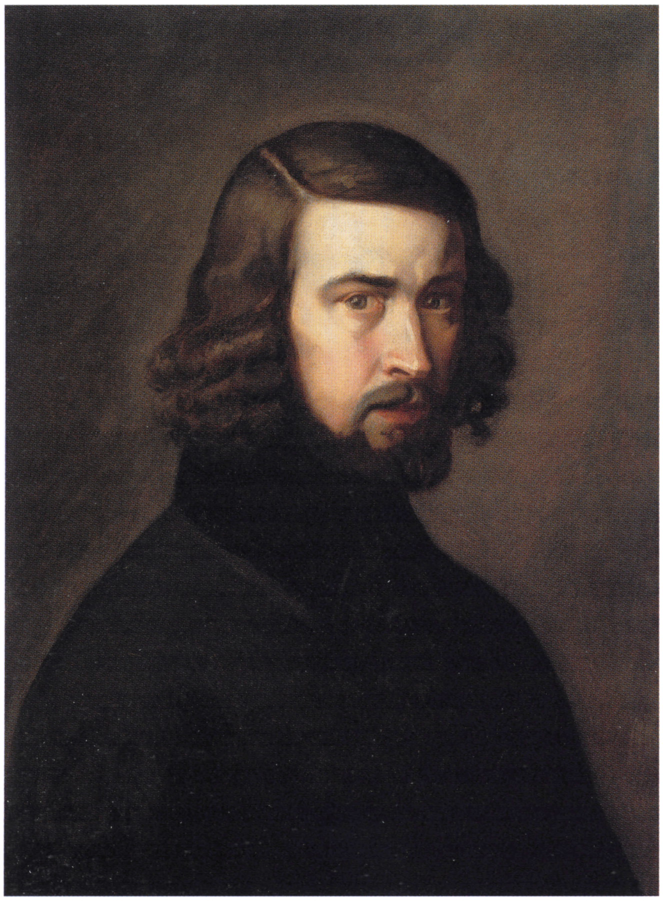
2
Salvador Dalí in front of the statue of Millet, Gruchy 1975

"This Artistic Fauve": Millet as Modern Artist

Simon Kelly



3
Jean-François Millet
The Angelus, c. 1857–59
Oil on canvas, 55.5 × 66 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (bequest of Alfred
Chauchard, 1910)



4
Jean-François Millet
Self-Portrait, c. 1840–41
Oil on canvas, 63.5 × 47 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (museum purchase with funds donated by contribution)

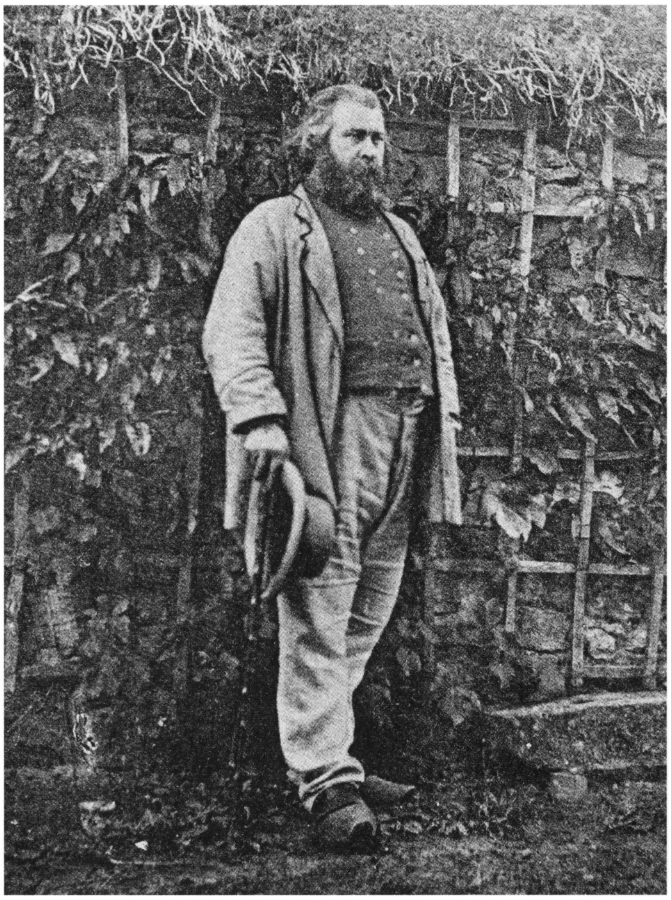
It is a bit like disturbing the fortunate
in their rest.
—Millet, 1863

On July 1, 1889, Millet's painting *The Angelus* (3) sold at auction in Paris for the enormous sum of 553,000 francs, the highest price that had ever been paid for a modern painting.[1] Two years previously, in 1887, Millet had received an extensive and wide-ranging official retrospective, something that he had been denied at his death. This filled the Ecole des Beaux-Arts building and comprised 218 paintings, pastels, drawings, and prints.[2] By the end of the 1880s Millet's works were highly lucrative commodities, while his own identity had been co-opted into the official establishment.[3] This process was assisted by biographies that constructed an acceptable and marketable image of the painter. Notably, in 1881, Millet's close friend and agent Alfred Sensier had posthumously published *La vie et l'oeuvre de J.-F. Millet*,[4] a book that promoted a view of a pious, conservative painter and which effectively depoliticized his career.[5] Yet the artist's commercial, institutional, and biographical acceptance in the 1880s belies his original radicalism as well as his independent and often rebarbative personality. This essay aims to rediscover the radical charge that surrounded the artist's painting, drawing on the range of his work, his extensive and often little-known correspondence, and the heated debates that surrounded his output during his career.[6]

The obituaries published after Millet's death in January 1875 generally glossed over the controversies that had surrounded his work.[7] Paul Mantz, for example, highlighted the formal innovation in his work, noting that "Millet brought into the new school a new element, a manner which by condensing form, generalizes and aggrandizes it."[8] The obituary by the republican critic Philippe Burty was more unusual in linking the artist's work to contemporary radical politics.[9] Burty had first met Millet in 1861 when he had written the first catalogue of the artist's prints in an article for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.[10] He now described Millet's work as "completely modern in spirit" and noted that, had the artist lived longer, his work "would have found its development and shone brightly in the republican society into which we are entering."[11] For Burty, Millet's "modernity" was closely associated with his choice of peasant subject matter, and he quoted the republican politician Léon Gambetta, who had recently evoked the "strength" of the French peasantry as being crucial to the future of France.[12] Burty was writing at an optimistic moment when the Constitutional Laws of 1875, formally establishing the Third Republic, were in the process of being passed. For him, Millet's imagery of peasant life anticipated the promise of a more egalitarian society after the years of the Second Empire (1852–70).

The connection between radical art and politics in Millet's work allies him with an avant-garde tradition associated with Eugène Delacroix, particularly his *Liberty Leading the*

People (1830, Musée du Louvre, Paris), and Gustave Courbet, especially the latter's peasant subjects. In his influential book *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), Peter Bürger associated the term "avant-garde" with early twentieth-century artistic movements, including Dada and Surrealism.[13] However, many recent writers have emphasized the importance of this tradition in the nineteenth century.[14] The term was first used in 1825 by the writer and social reformer Olinde Rodrigues, who referred to the artist's role as in the vanguard of social and political reform.[15] Millet's work was consistently promoted and supported by left-wing republican critics. Théophile Thoré, for example, described Millet as a "country doctor" whose imagery of rural life offered a remedy to the decadence and extravagant spending associated with the Second Empire and the cult of Napoleon III.[16] Although Millet never clearly defined his political position, he was undoubtedly supportive of republicanism. He rejected any association with socialism or radical socialist clubs but was deeply empathetic in his work to the hardships of the rural working population. In about 1862 he was photographed at Barbizon, the village and artists' colony on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau, to the southeast of Paris, where he had moved in 1849 and where he lived until his death (5). He stands in his *sabots*, wooden clogs, a sign of his self-identification as a peasant, with right foot forward and eyes fixed straight ahead.[17] The photograph captures a sense of his independent and combative nature. Alfred Sensier told him, "You look like a leader of peasants who is about to be shot," a remark that pleased him.[18] Sensier wrote of the image, "this little picture is, to me, Millet's whole life."[19]

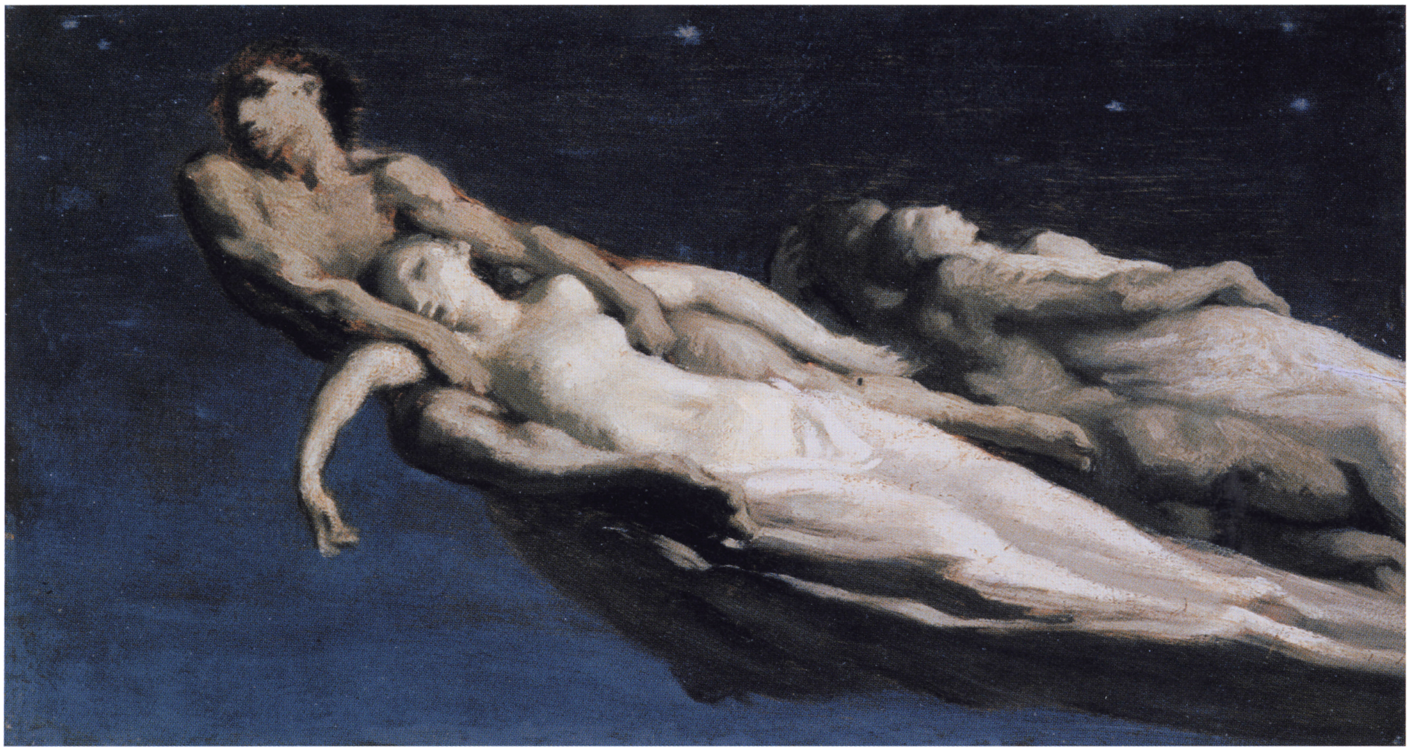


5
Jean-François Millet, c. 1862
Photo: Eugène Cuvelier
From E. Moreau-Nélaton, *Millet raconté par lui-même*, Paris 1921, vol. 2, fig. 170

Origins and the Nudes

Jean-François Millet's focus on rural life was underpinned by his experiences growing up in a relatively affluent peasant family. He always emphasized his understanding of peasant life, although he was also critical of the uncouthness of the peasantry of Barbizon.[20] Millet was born in Gruchy, a small and remote village on the rugged Normandy coast, close to Cherbourg. He would always retain a Normandy accent as well as a slight stammer. His father was a peasant landowner who, in June 1813, inherited a house with a stable, a courtyard, a three-acre market garden, and fifty acres of cultivable land.[21] His mother came from a religious family, and Millet developed a deep familiarity with the Bible, which he read in early illustrated editions. He was the eldest child and as a young man regularly helped on the family farm. Burty noted that he was "proud" of being a "good laborer" and recounted an anecdote of Millet ploughing an arrow-straight furrow across the plain of Chailly outside Barbizon.[22] Numerous other biographers and friends noted his mastery of the use of farm tools and his first-hand understanding of farm life.[23]

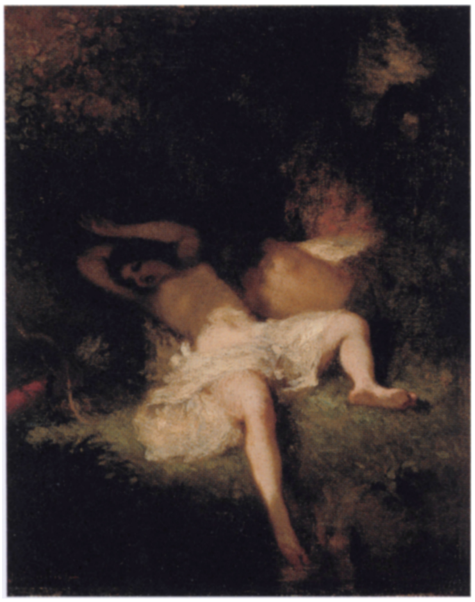
Millet's early education gave him an understanding of Latin and a love of literature. His brother Pierre noted that Jean-François would



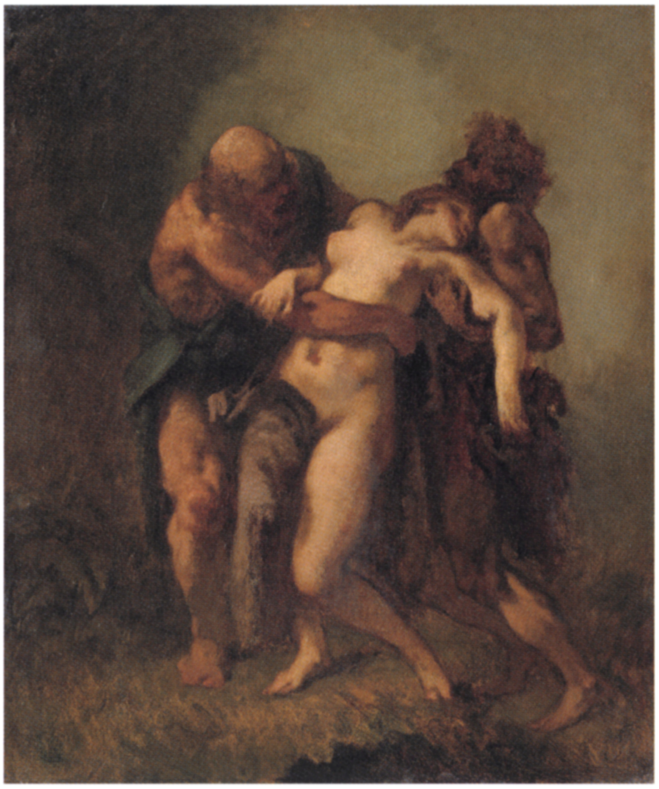
6
Jean-François Millet
The Shooting Stars, 1847–48
Oil on panel, 18.7 × 34.5 cm
Amgueddfa Cymr—National Museum
Wales, Cardiff (bequeathed by
Gwendoline Davies, 1951)

often read until well past midnight, and his tastes were diverse, ranging from Homer and Virgil to Shakespeare, to the contemporary American transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson.[24] In 1833 Millet began his training with the portrait painter Bon Dumouchel in Cherbourg, before beginning his full-time studies there in 1835 with the artist Lucien-Théophile Langlois de Chèvreville. In 1837 he moved to Paris, where he studied for two years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts with the noted history painter Paul Delaroche. Millet's early academic studies show his mastery in rendering the human body. Yet Delaroche labeled him as "dangerous."[25] Indeed, in the years to come Millet would repeatedly affirm his opposition to academic art, and his anti-academic technique would become a central aspect of his modernity.

In the early 1840s Millet made his living by painting portraits. Now in his mid-twenties, he also painted a self-portrait depicting himself as a young bohemian, with long hair framing his finely chiseled features (4). In the mid-1840s, however, he began to produce nudes for the Parisian market. In later readings of Millet's work, notably that of Sensier, which emphasized the artist's morality, these were largely marginalized. In the years 1846 to about 1850, however, Millet produced approximately twenty-five paintings and fifty drawings of the nude that were often surprisingly sensual and erotic, even violent.[26] These represented a rupture with his conservative, religious background.[27] Among them is *Shooting Stars* (6), a scene from Canto V of Dante's *Inferno*, representing the souls of the lustful: Paolo Malatesta wraps his legs around the body of Francesca



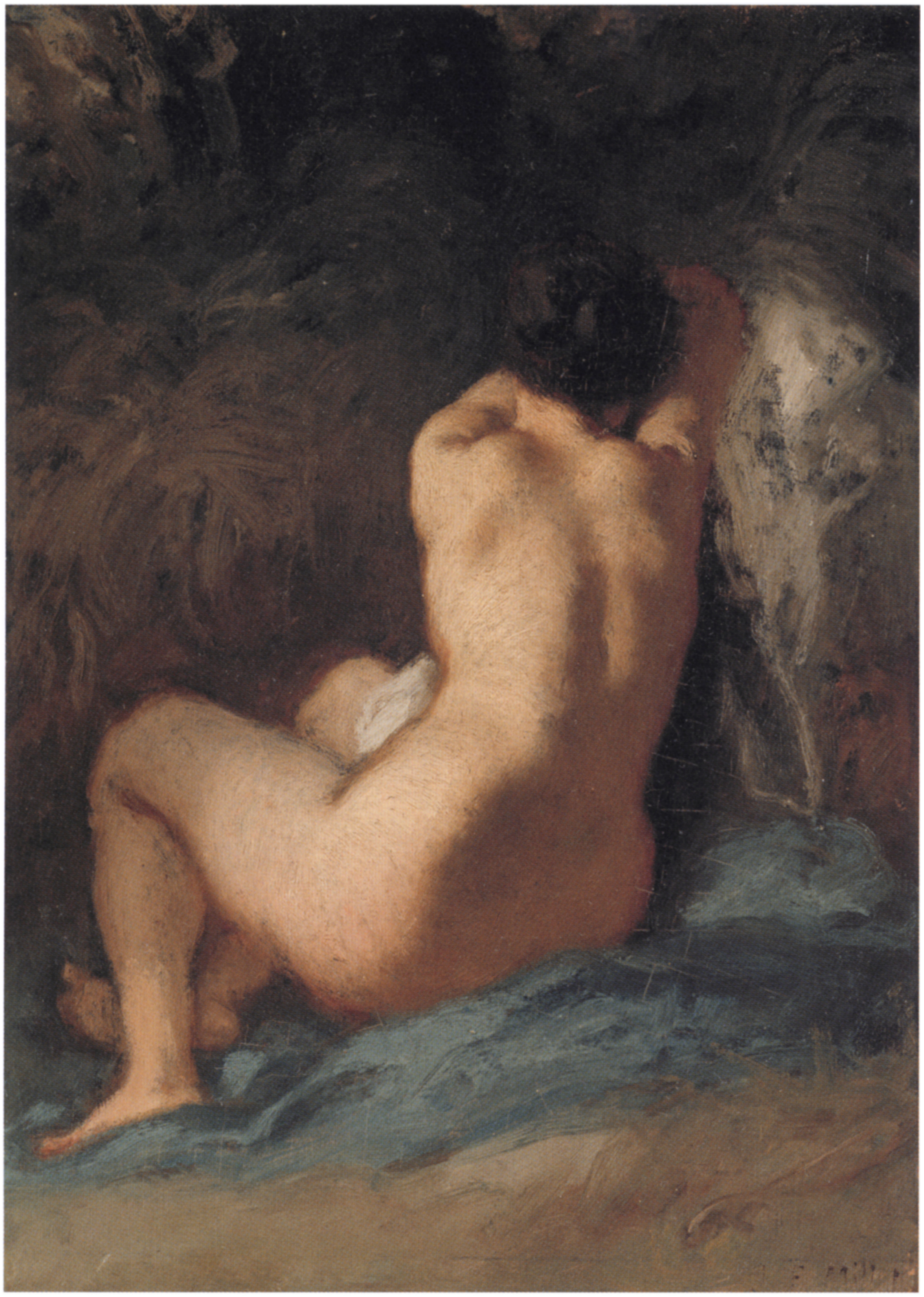
7
Jean-François Millet
Diana Resting, c. 1845
Oil on canvas, 40.6 × 33 cm
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
(Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch Collection)



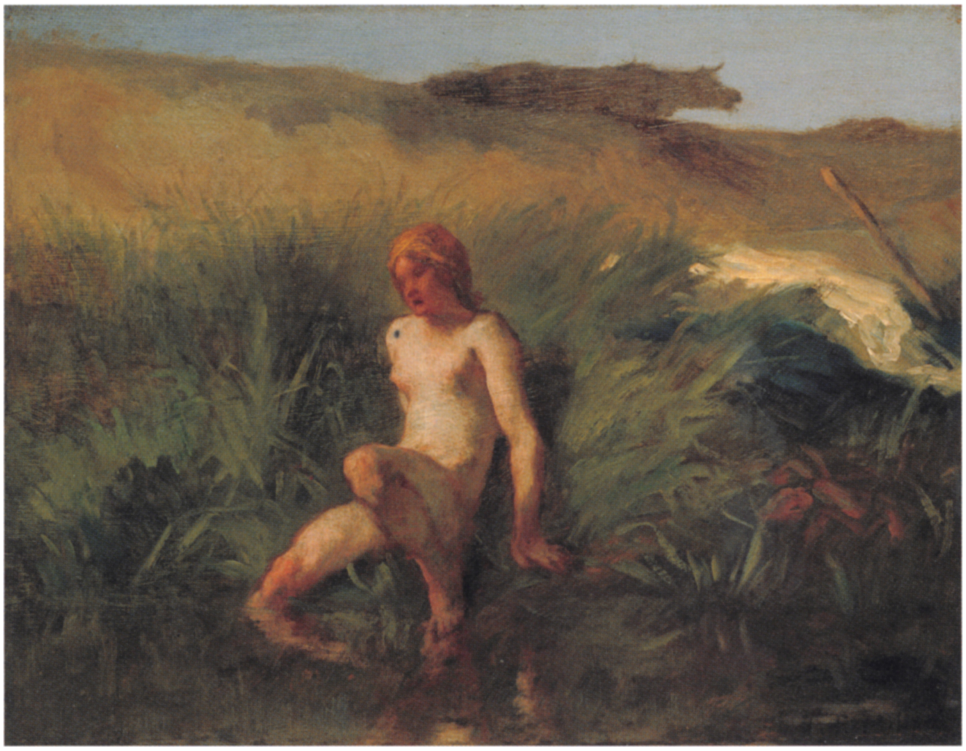
8
Jean-François Millet
Susanna and the Elders, c. 1846–48
Oil on canvas, 55.8 × 46.7 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
(Felton Bequest, 1921)

da Rimini as they are carried along by powerful winds. In *Diana Resting* (7), the goddess extends her body by a riverbank in what appears to be a post-coital swoon, with her lover, seen from behind, lying alongside her.[28] *Susanna and the Elders* (8) shows a young woman being dragged away violently by two old men, in a subversive treatment of a theme that conventionally showed the men gazing at Susanna from a distance. Other more pastoral images show bathing women in a range of poses, sometimes sitting, at other times crouching (9, 10, 11). Millet also produced related drawings such as *Bust of a Young Nude Girl* (13), and the erotic *The Lovers* (12), in which the man cups the breast of the woman and places his hand suggestively between her legs.

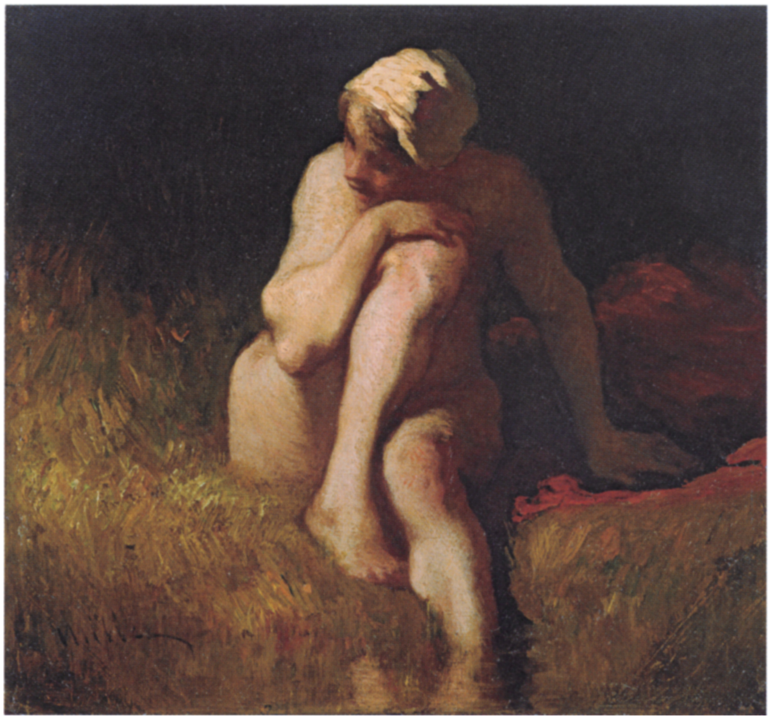
Millet's interest in contorted bodies was evident in his large-scale *Hagar and Ishmael* (88), commissioned in 1848 from "citizen Millet" by the republican government in the idealistic early days of the Second Republic (1848–52).[29] In a desert expanse rendered in thick, dry paint, the semi-nude Hagar twists her torso, unable to face the torment of witnessing the suffering of her naked child, Ishmael, who is stretched out behind her dying of thirst. Around the same time, Millet produced a semi-nude *Liberty* (14) for a competition organized by the Second Republic administration.[30] Seated beneath the Liberty Tree in her red Phrygian cap, this allegorical representation of the Republic pulls up the oppressed and treads on her enemies. Millet was among the most enthusiastic participants in this competition, and his mother wrote to him at the time that he was working "like a devil for the Republic."[31] After the late 1840s Millet would rarely produce nudes, although he did return to the subject in the early 1860s



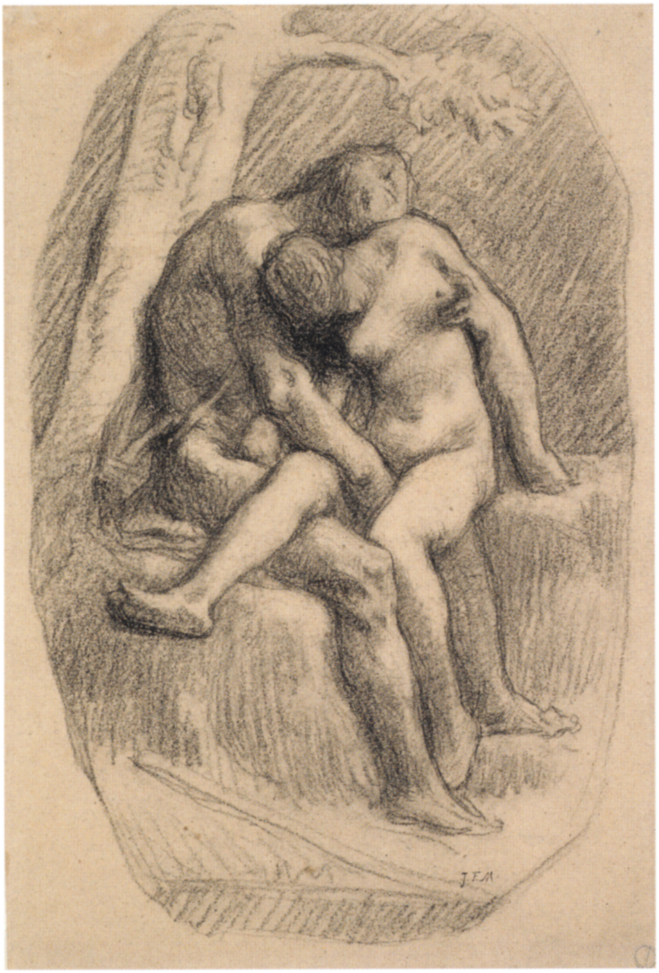
9
Jean-François Millet
Seated Nude, 1847–48
Oil on canvas, 25.1 × 18.4 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
(The Henry C. and Martha B. Angell
Collection)



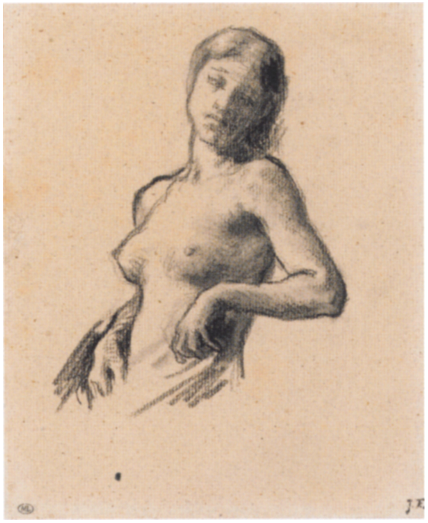
10
Jean-François Millet
The Bather, 1846–48
Oil on wood, 18.5 × 24.1 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
(gift of R. Horace Gallatin, 1949)



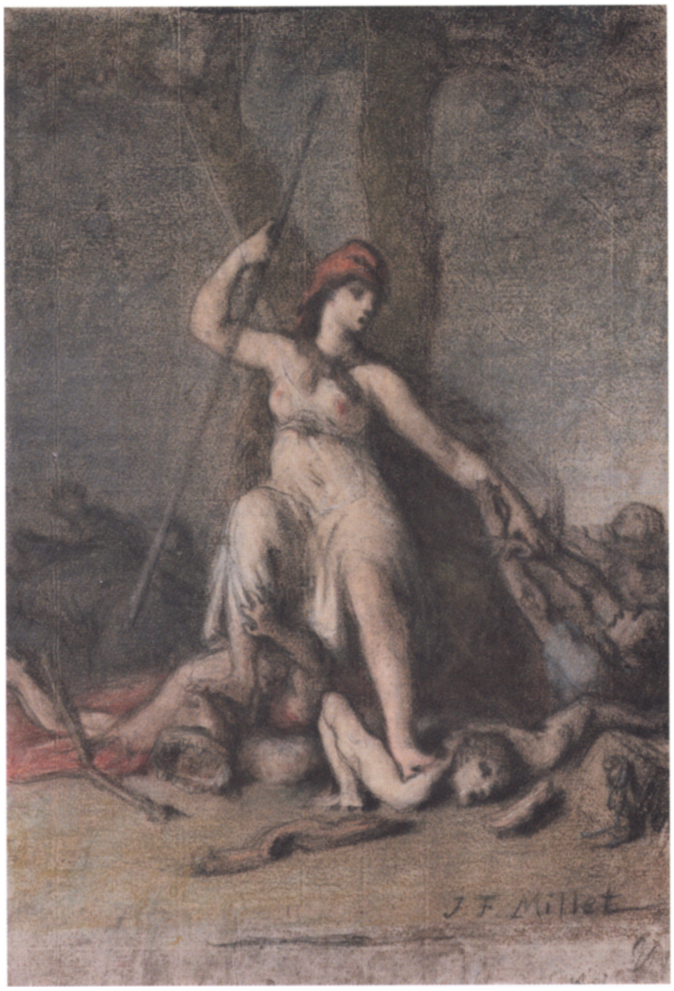
11
Jean-François Millet
Naked Peasant Girl Sitting on a Bank, 1847–48
Oil on wood, 18 × 19 cm
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und
Kunstbau, München (permanent loan from
Christoph Heilmann Foundation)



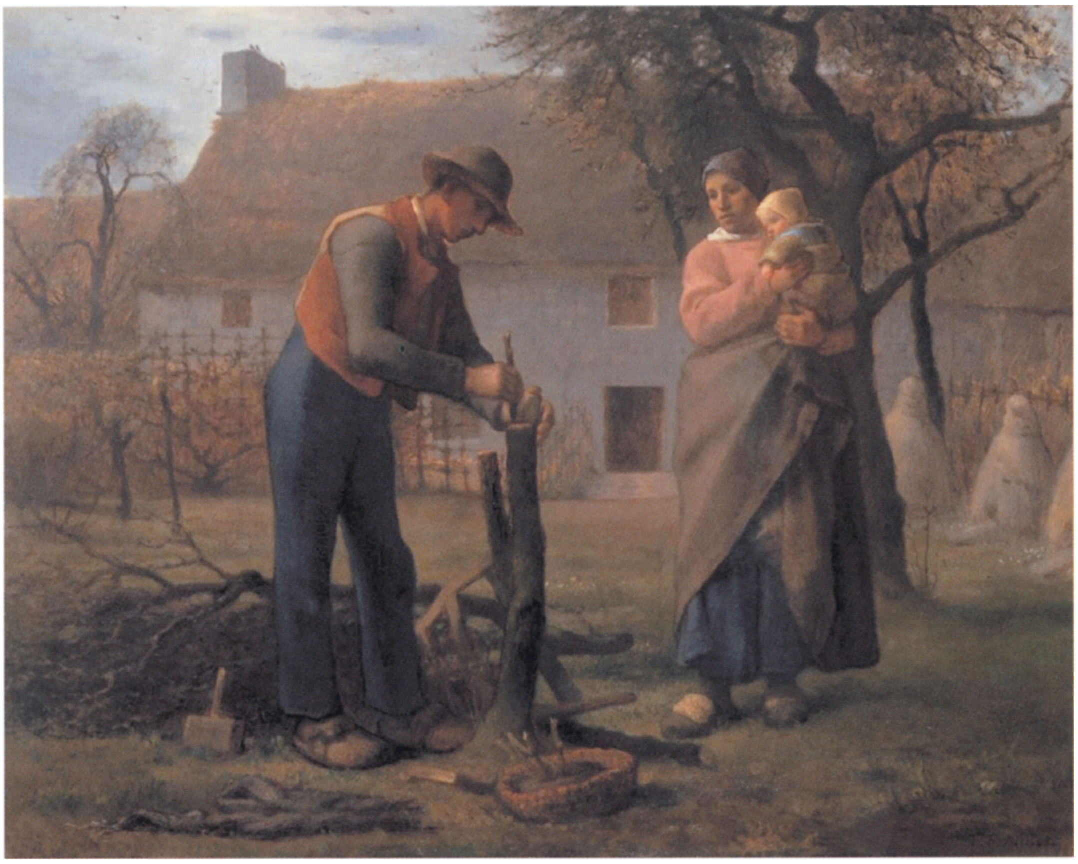
12
Jean-François Millet
The Lovers, 1846–50
Black crayon on paper, 35.2 × 22.3 cm
Art Institute of Chicago (The Charles Deering Collection)



13
Jean-François Millet
Bust of a Young Nude Girl, c. 1851
Charcoal on paper, 19.9 × 16.4 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (gift of Walter Gay, 1913)



14
Jean-François Millet
Liberty, c. 1848
Black chalk and pastel, 47.2 × 31.7 cm
Cleveland Museum of Art
(bequest of Muriel Butkin)

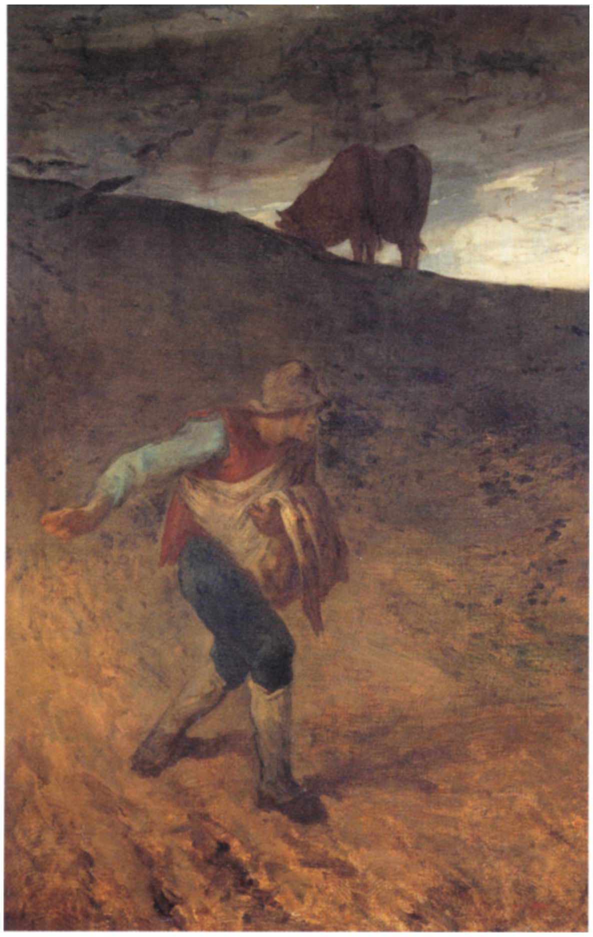


15
Jean-François Millet
Man Grafting a Tree, 1855
Oil on canvas, 81 × 100 cm
Neue Pinakothek, Munich

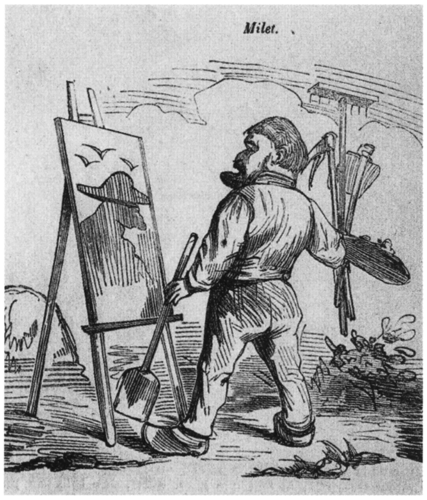
when he painted *The Goose Girl* (60), a view of an adolescent peasant girl dipping her toe into a creek. Here he emphasized the rough hands and feet of the girl as evidence of her labor.[32]

Sowers and Harvesters

Millet began to paint peasant subjects in the late 1840s, after apparently being shamed by a discussion about the licentiousness of his nudes.[33] In 1851 he wrote to Sensier that such works "suit my temperament best; for I must confess, even if you think me a socialist, that the human side of art is what touches me most."[34] In focusing on peasantry, Millet was representing a rural class that dominated in France in terms of numbers: in the mid-nineteenth century, 75 percent of France's population lived off the land, a higher proportion than in other European nations.[35] He was also representing a class that was in crisis. As the British art historian T. J. Clark has noted, his imagery represented "a portrait of a class, and a society, in dissolution."[36] Increasing numbers of peasants were migrating to the towns in search of greater prosperity, and this paralleled Millet's own personal story of moving to Paris in 1837. The French historian Eugène Bonnemère highlighted the hardships of peasant life in his seminal *Histoire de paysans*, published in 1856. He divided the peasant into three types: the peasant owner, peasant farmer, and peasant worker.[37] The first two types enjoyed a certain level of prosperity but the third faced considerable poverty. Male peasant workers earned 1.25 francs a day, with the possibility of an extra franc daily over the fifty days of the harvest.[38] This compared poorly with the wages of Parisian manual workers, who earned three to five francs a day.



16
Jean-François Millet
The Sower, 1847–48
Oil on canvas, 95.3 × 61.3 cm
Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales, Cardiff

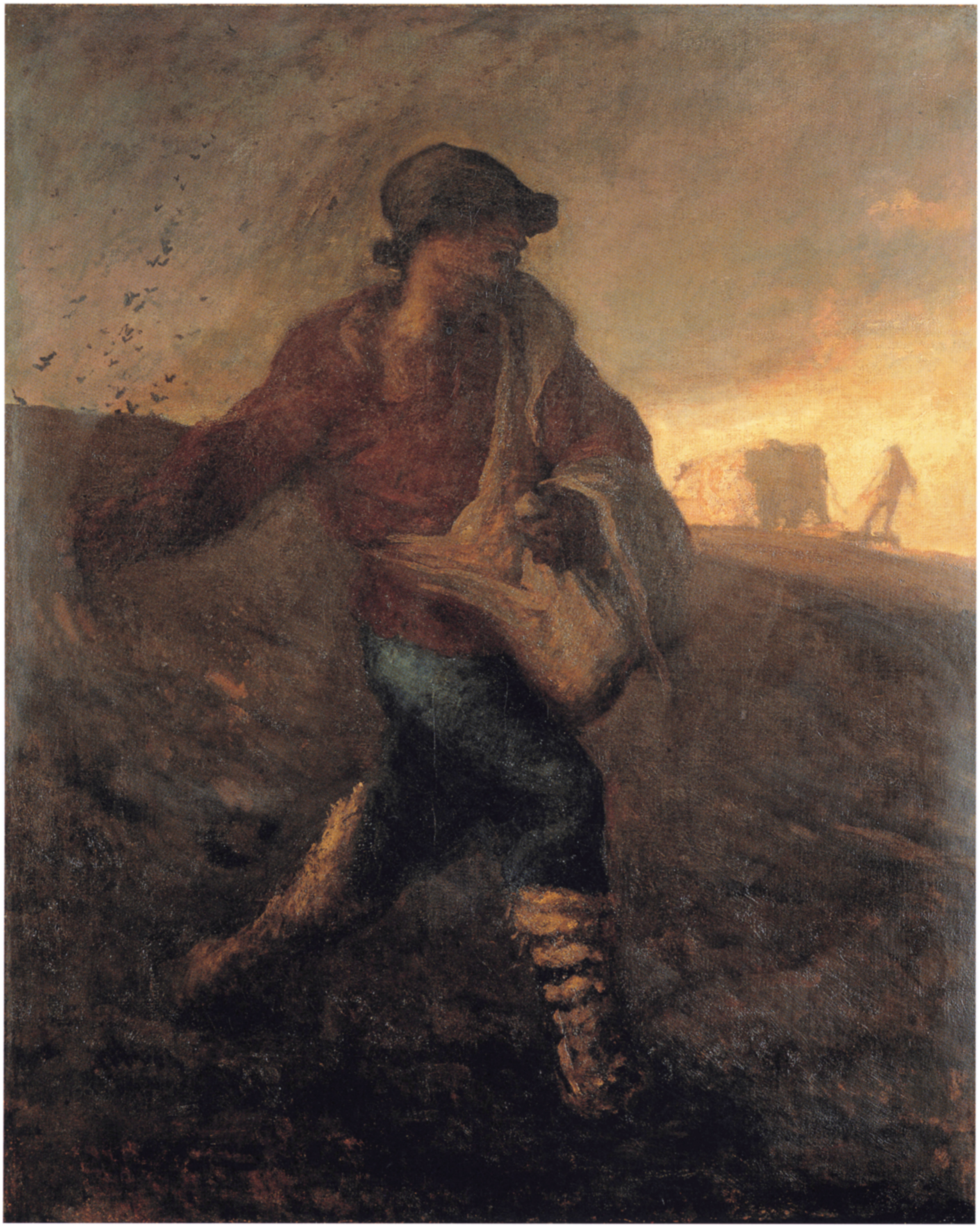


17
Nadar
J.-F. Millet, 1852
From E. Moreau-Nélaton, *Millet raconté par lui-même*, Paris 1921, vol. 1, fig. 78

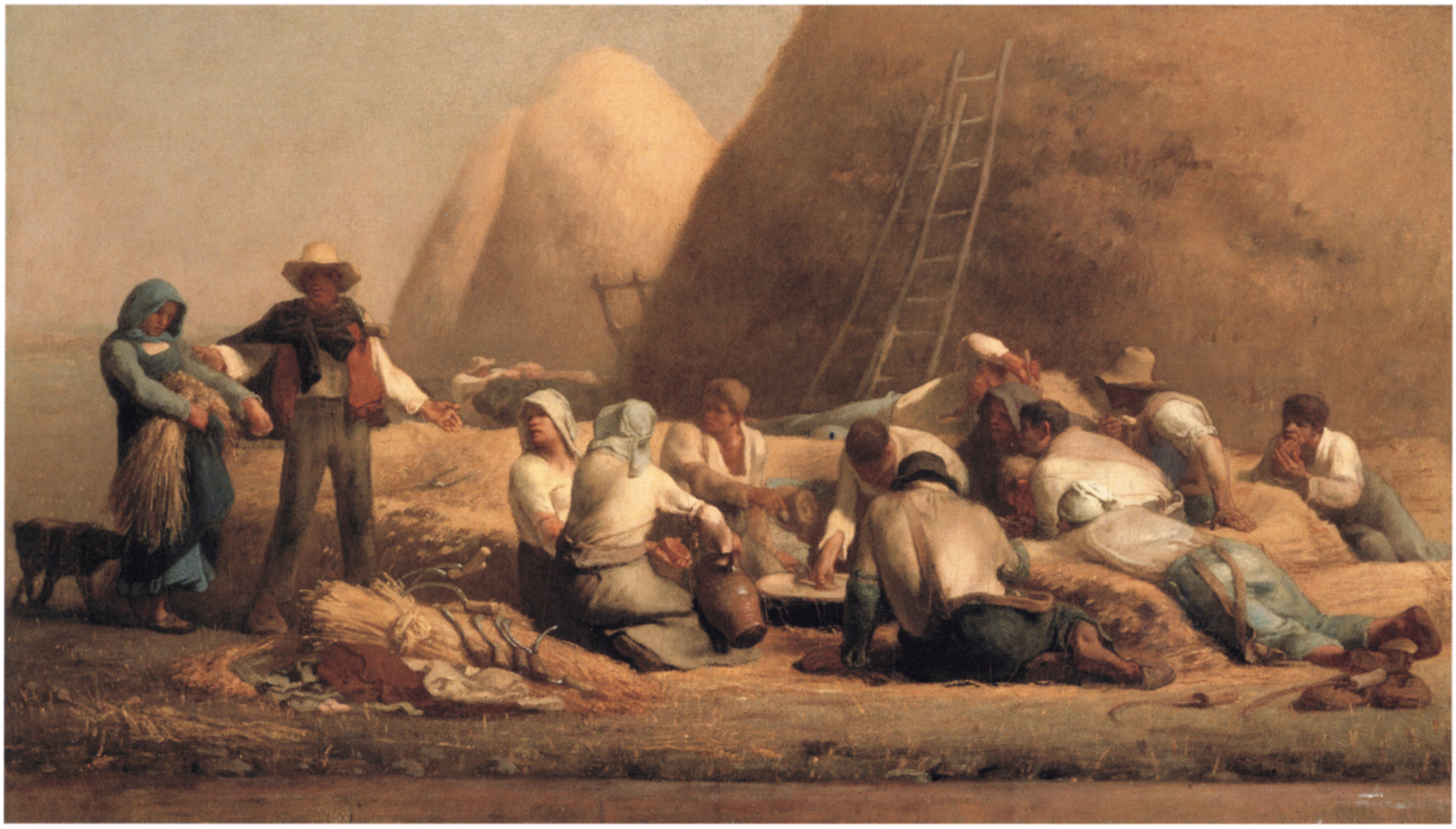
The community of Barbizon consisted of smallholders and day workers, and it lay amid flat, fertile, and agriculturally rich land with a diversity of crops.[39] In the mid-nineteenth century it had a population of around two hundred,[40] and Millet represented the range of its peasantry, from the relative prosperity of the smallholder family in *Man Grafting a Tree* (15) to the poverty-stricken worker in *Man with a Hoe* (26).

Among the activities that particularly preoccupied Millet was that of sowing, a theme with biblical connotations. His earliest painting on this subject (16) showed a figure against a high hillside at Gruchy, the village of his birth, with crows swooping down to eat the seed. Subsequently he produced a picture (1850, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) with a more powerful and dominating form. As a young man Millet had sown seeds on the family farm, and Sensier suggested that the figure could be based on the artist himself.[41] In seeking to communicate powerful emotion through gesture, Millet looked to the example of Michelangelo, whose drawings he had studied at the Louvre soon after his arrival in Paris some ten years earlier.[42] Millet produced a second version of *The Sower* (18), which he showed at the 1850–51 Salon— to considerable controversy. He followed the criticism around his work carefully and was pleased with the review by the Saint-Simonian critic François Sabatier-Ungher, who described the figure thus: "the gesture has a very Michelangelesque energy and the tone a strange power [...]. It's the modern *Demos*."[43] The latter term undoubtedly referenced the newly enfranchised male population in the wake of the 1848 revolution.[44] Millet also liked Théophile Gautier's comparison of his paint surfaces to the earth.[45] This analogy soon became a critical trope; in 1852 the caricaturist Nadar represented Millet as standing in his *sabots* before his easel, his painting tools of a spade, pickaxe, rake, and hoe in hand (17).

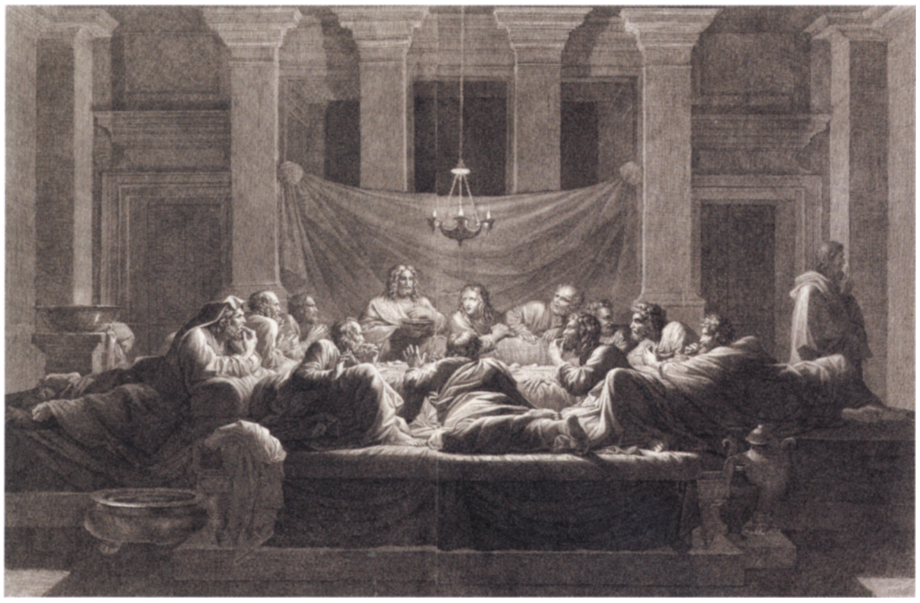
As a counterpoint to these sowing works, Millet produced *Harvesters Resting* (19), a scene perhaps inspired by the one large-scale farm around Barbizon. The painting was the product of some fifty studies—more than for any other picture he ever produced. Millet's composition, in the frieze-like arrangement of the figures,



18
Jean-François Millet
The Sower, 1850
Oil on canvas, 99.7 × 80 cm
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art,
Kofu



19
Jean-François Millet
Harvesters Resting (Ruth and Boaz),
1850–53
Oil on canvas, 67.3 × 119.7 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (bequest of
Mrs. Martin Brimmer)



20
Jean Pesne
The Eucharist (after Poussin), c. 1680–94
Etching and engraving
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

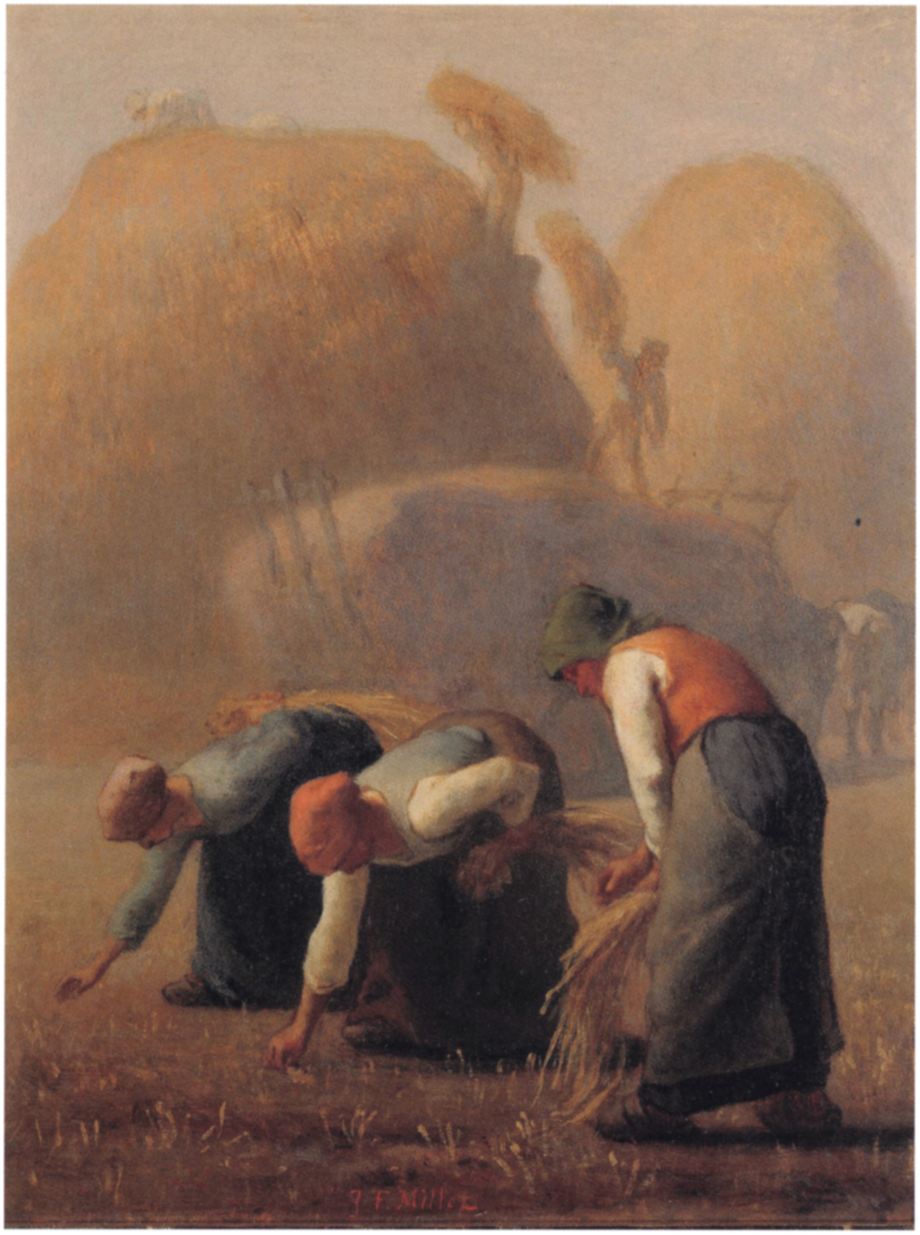
referenced the seventeenth-century French painter Nicolas Poussin's *Eucharist*, which Millet undoubtedly knew in print form (20). Millet deeply admired his fellow Norman artist and wrote that Poussin was "the prophet, the sage, and the philosopher, while also the most eloquent teller of a story."[46] Millet transposed the gravity of Poussin's religious painting to his group of peasant workers, producing a work with newly flattened and abbreviated forms. The picture was the largest and most important of his three paintings on view at the 1853 Salon, and his friend the controversial sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye remarked that his exhibit was "the strongest of the Salon."[47] Gautier, meanwhile, noted the work's "intelligent sacrifice of details."[48] Millet's ability to create generalized forms would become an important focus of his "modernity" in the discourse around his work, this approach setting his work apart from the more photographic naturalism of other peasant imagery at the Salon, notably that of Jules Breton and Philippe-Auguste Jeanron. In contrast to the official success of these other artists, Millet was overlooked for state patronage during the Second Empire.[49]

New Controversy

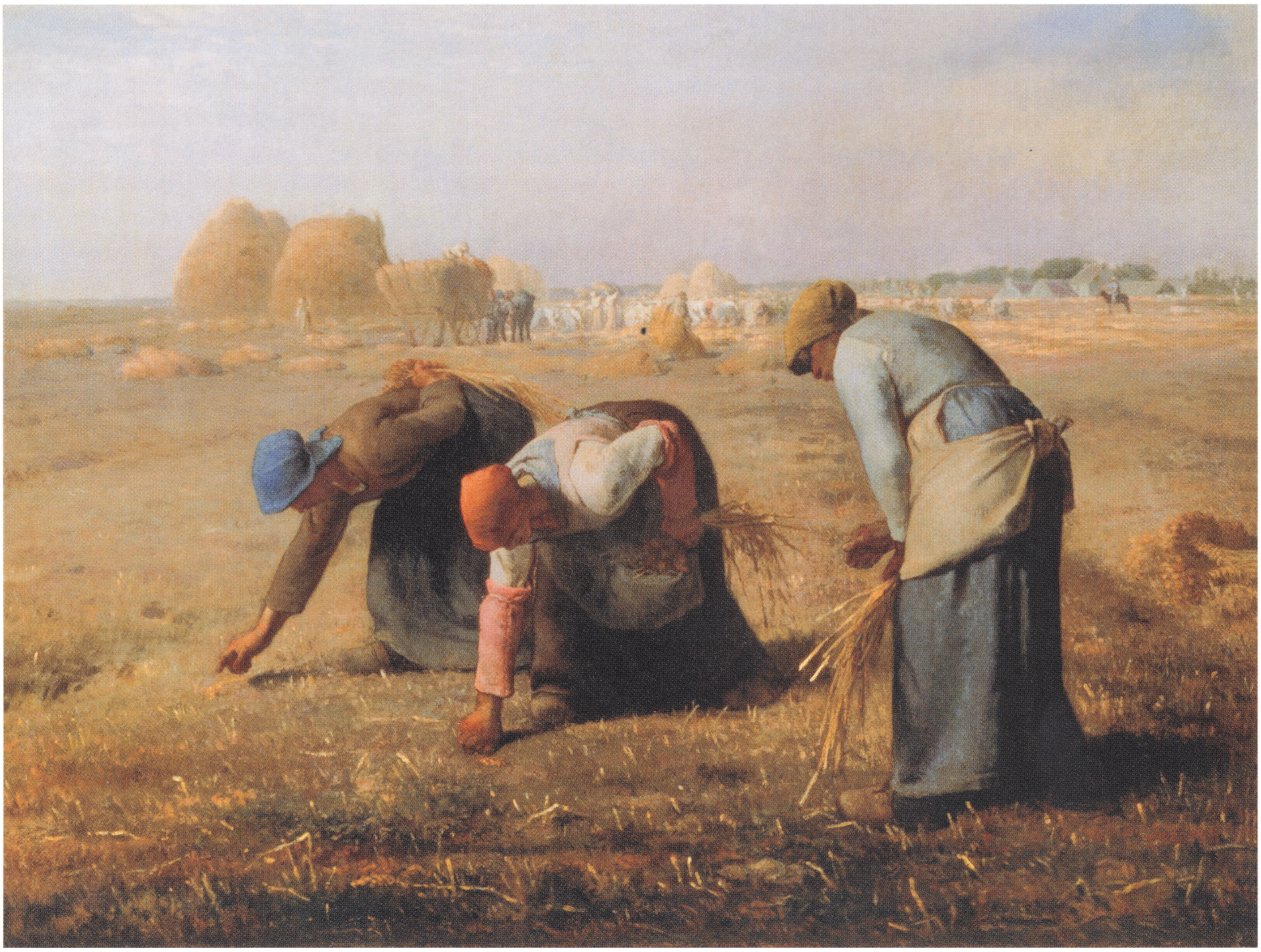
At the 1857 Salon, Millet showed *The Gleaners* (22), provoking widespread controversy. Gleaning was a centuries-old practice whereby workers collected the stalks and ears of wheat that were left behind after the harvest. Often—and especially if scythes had been used, as opposed to the more efficient sickle—a significant amount of grain could be gathered.[50] Traditionally this privilege had been freely granted by the rural community, but by the mid-nineteenth century, landowners were increasingly insisting on selling the right to glean. For the republican Bonnemère this signaled the immorality of contemporary society, where "speculation" triumphed over "charity."[51] Within the context of this debate over the growing alienation of the gleaner within a capitalist economy, Millet represented three women with powerful curving and echoing forms that highlighted and ennobled their stoic labor. He emphasized their isolation from the large-scale, organized farm activity in the distance, overseen by a foreman on horseback. *The Gleaners* represented the culmination of a series of works, including most notably a small, luminous painting from the early 1850s (21). Conservatives saw a threatening message in Millet's sympathetic representation of these impoverished outsiders. The journalist Jean Rousseau thought the work incited revolution and that it recalled "the pikes and scaffolds of 1793."[52] The republican art critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary, however, saw that Millet gave a nobility to his subjects: he noted that though the painting "recalls terrible misery," it was "one of those pages of true and great nature, as Homer and Virgil found."[53]

Millet's radical credentials were reinforced when his *Death and the Woodcutter* (23), an image of the tired labor of an aged woodcutter, inspired by Jean de La Fontaine's fable, was refused by the 1859 Salon. Woodcutters, as generally itinerant workers who formed part of an emergent rural proletariat that threatened to revolt, were also controversial figures.[54] The writer Alexandre Dumas *père* noted that the woodcutter in Millet's picture "is not the peasant of 1660 but the proletarian of 1859."[55] Millet's other submission, *Peasant Woman Tending a Cow* (24), was accepted but attacked, notably by Charles Baudelaire, the great poet and critic and advocate of Romanticism, in what was undoubtedly a class-based critique. He argued that Millet treated his peasants with an excessive sense of gravity: "His peasants are pedants who have too high an opinion of themselves. [...] In their monotonous ugliness, all his little pariahs have a philosophical pretension."[56]

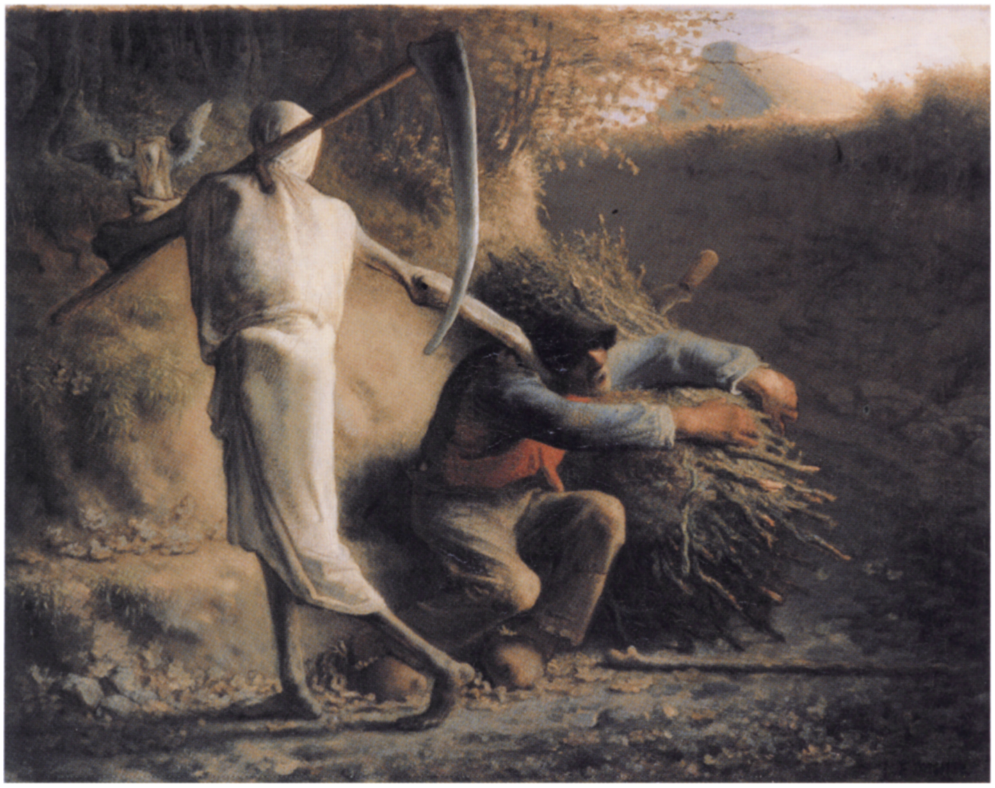
By the late 1850s, Millet was supplanting Gustave Courbet as the most subversive painter of peasant life as the latter turned to landscapes and hunting scenes. The conservative critic Olivier Merson wrote that while Courbet "reforms and improves," Millet was becoming "darker and more sombre."[57] Millet's *Waiting* (25), exhibited at the 1861 Salon, openly challenged the academic tradition of religious painting. His scene illustrated an episode from the Book of Tobit. Rather than following the canonical narrative and locating the scene in the Middle East, he controversially situated it in a rustic French village resembling that in which he himself had grown up. The protagonists



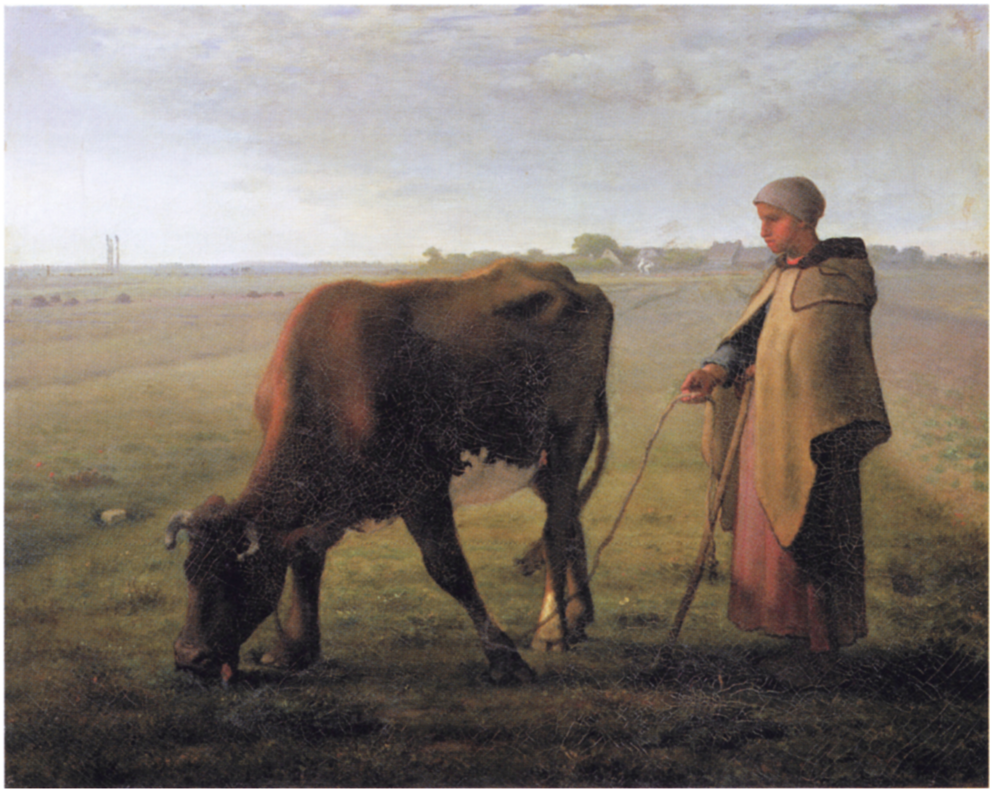
21
Jean-François Millet
Summer, The Gleaners, 1853
Oil on canvas, 38.3 × 29.3 cm
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art, Kofu



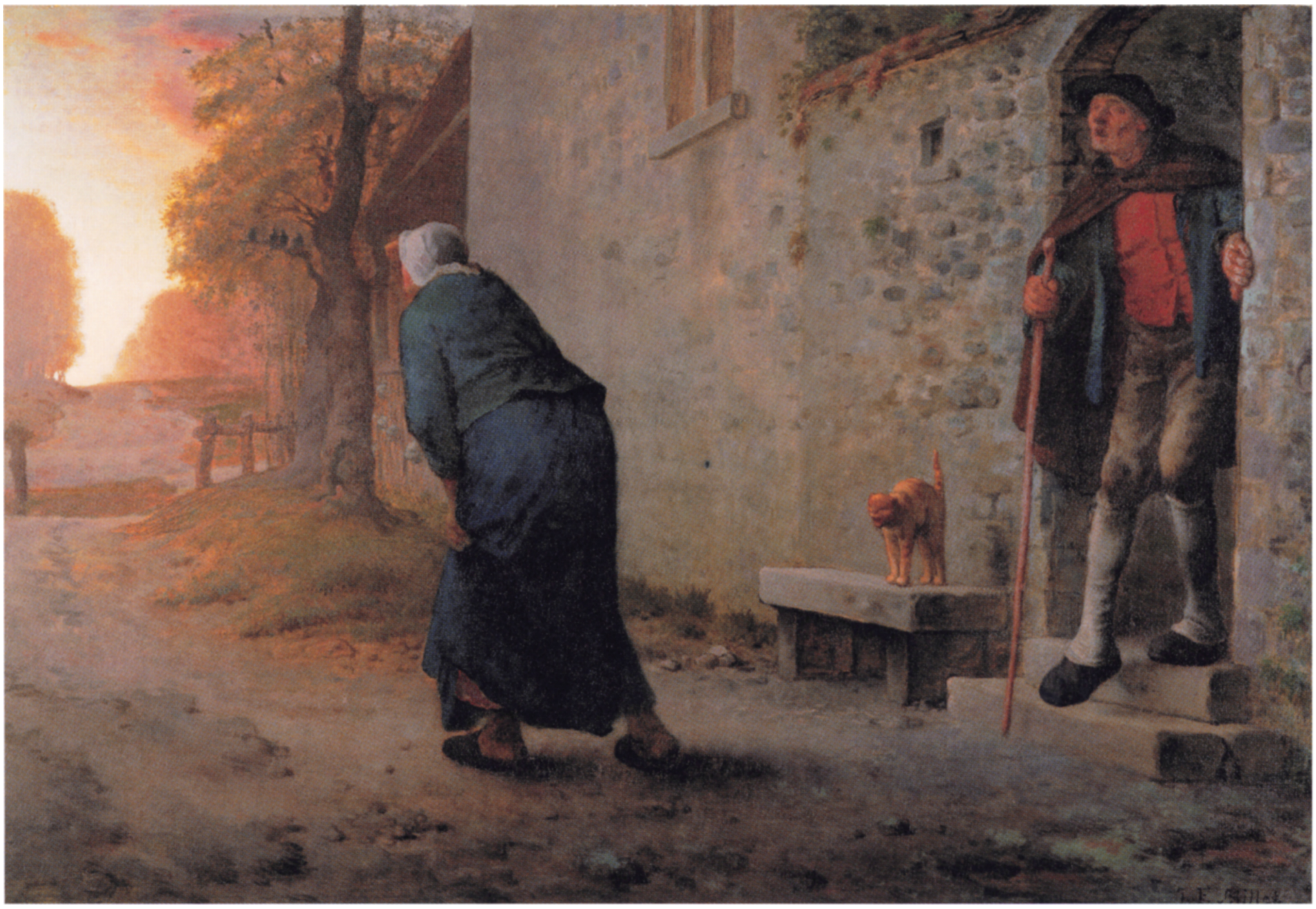
22
Jean-François Millet
The Gleaners, 1857
Oil on canvas, 83.8 × 110 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (donation subject
to usufruct of Mrs. Pommery)



23
Jean-François Millet
Death and the Woodcutter, 1859
Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 98.5 cm
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen



24
Jean-François Millet
Peasant Woman Tending a Cow, 1858
Oil on canvas, 73 × 93 cm
Musée de l'Ain, Bourg-en-Bresse



25
Jean-François Millet
Waiting (Tobit and His Wife), c. 1853–61
Oil on canvas, 83.8 × 121.7 cm
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City
(purchase by William Rockhill Nelson Trust)

Anna and Tobit appear in this work as two aged peasants in ragged contemporary dress. Millet used peasants from Barbizon as his models, thus heightening the authenticity of the scene.[58] His model for Anna, Adèle Marier (née Moschner), recalled that the artist had a collection of peasant clothing for her to wear, including the cowl—traditionally worn at *veillées*, or evening social gatherings—that she wore for this picture.[59]

Alongside his study from nature, Millet continued to look closely at the art of the past. The work of the sixteenth-century Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder was undoubtedly the single greatest artistic influence on his treatment of figures, and the pose of the blind Tobit in *Waiting* drew on the protagonists of Bruegel's *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1568, Museo di Capodimonte, Napels).[60] In the mid-nineteenth century Bruegel was still seen as little more than a comic painter, and Millet was among the first to recognize the humanity and tragedy in his work.[61] Millet's supporters praised the poetry of *Waiting*, but his detractors attacked him for demeaning the story of Tobit by using contemporary peasant subjects. The art historian Léon Lagrange joked that they seemed to be waiting for an omnibus at Barbizon.[62] Others attacked their "ugliness" and "caricatural gaucherie,"[63] while the writer Paul de Saint-Victor argued that Millet's subversive treatment had analogies with Mormonism, the recently founded religion that had challenged traditional Christianity.[64]

Man with a Hoe

Millet did not back down in the face of his critics, instead developing *Man with a Hoe* (26), a picture that was the most controversial of his career when it was exhibited at the 1863 Salon. Millet showed an exhausted laborer using his hoe to remove weeds and rocks from poor ground in order to create cultivable land like that in the distance.[65] As early as 1850, Millet had written: "Sometimes, in places where the land is sterile, you see figures hoeing and digging. From time to time one raises himself and straightens his back, as they call it, wiping his forehead with his brow. 'Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.' Is this the gay, jovial work some people would have us believe in? But, nevertheless, to me, it is true humanity and great poetry!"[66] Millet knew that his picture would arouse debate. In January 1862, in a letter to Sensier, he wrote: "*Man with a Hoe* will cause me to be abused by many people who do not like to have their minds filled with things that do not belong to their own circle, nor to be disturbed; but here I am on this terrain and I will stay here."[67] When the picture appeared at the Salon, Millet's figure was widely attacked for its "ugliness." The caricaturist Cham (Amédée de Noé) described Millet's "unfortunate peasant" as digging with his hoe "in the hope of finding the other half of his head, which M. Millet has hidden from him somewhere" (27). Critics repeatedly compared Millet's protagonist to Martin Dumollard, a peasant from just outside Lyon who had earned national notoriety for his serial murders of young maids.[68] The illustrator Bertall depicted Dumollard as Millet's peasant, digging the ground to bury the fourteenth woman he had killed.[69]

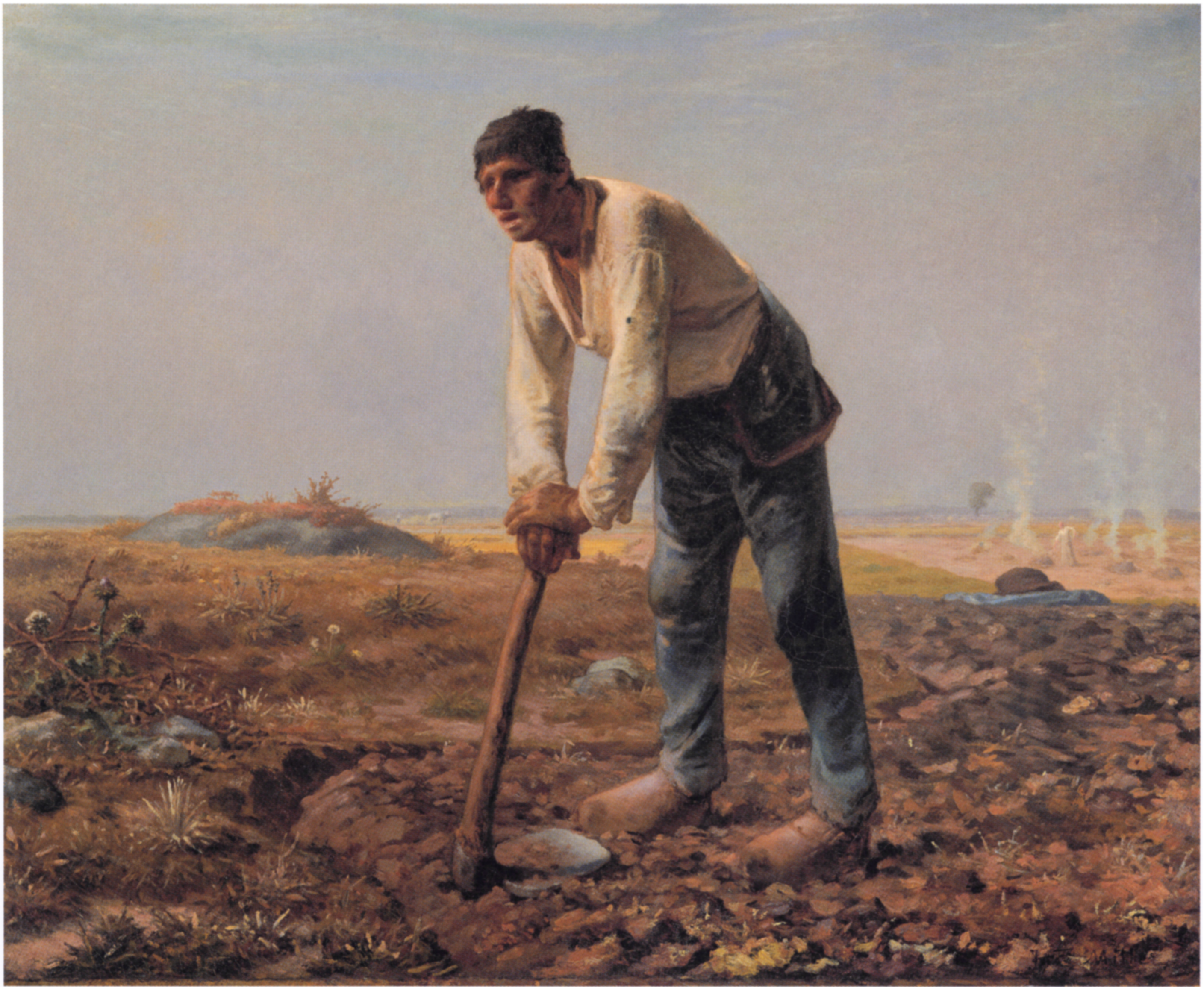
Alfred Sensier regularly sent the reviews of *Man with a Hoe* to Millet, and the artist read them carefully.[70] In response to these attacks he wrote a number of letters, and these have come to represent the most systematic defense of his painting in his career. In the first, which Sensier described as Millet's "credo" and for which he produced two drafts, he wrote:

> Some tell me that I deny the charms of the country. I find much more than charms —I find infinite glories. I see as well as they do the little flowers of which Christ said that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. I see the halos of dandelions, and the sun, also, which spreads out beyond the world its glory in the clouds. But I see as well, in the plain, the steaming horses at work and in a rocky place a man, all worn out, whose "han!" has been heard since morning, and who tries to straighten himself a moment and breathe. The drama is surrounded by beauty.[71]

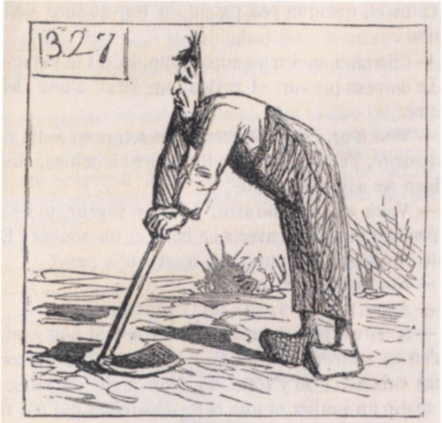
Millet's words reinforced the treatment in his picture whereby he rendered the delicacy of a purple thistle flower at bottom left alongside the utter exhaustion of the laborer. Three days later he wrote another letter, this time to a young critical supporter, Théodore Pelloquet, in which he attacked critics for their "bad taste and bad passions for their profit, without any concern for the good."[72] Millet felt that his work was underpinned by a moral impulse and the related hope that it might, in some way, improve society.[73] Soon after, in August 1863, Millet sent a letter—written in the third person—to the critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary, as a riposte to the charge that he was a follower of Courbet.[74] This was a strong assertion of independence. Millet emphasized that he was a "rustic" and "above all moved by man natively devoted to the great work of the land," and that his output was based on his experience as a laborer in the fields until the age of twenty-one.[75] He went on:

> One can strongly believe that a man who emphasizes constancy in always expressing the same essential ideas, who does so aware of the hostilities that they arouse, since it is a bit like disturbing the fortunate in their rest, and who does so although poor: one can believe that this man finds the core of this constancy in himself.[76]

In describing himself here, and emphasizing the resolute and uncompromising quality of his approach, Millet responded powerfully to the published discourse around his work, complicating the view of him presented by his brother Pierre as someone who never read the political newspapers.[77]



26
Jean-François Millet
Man with a Hoe, 1860–62
Oil on canvas, 81.9 × 100.3 cm
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

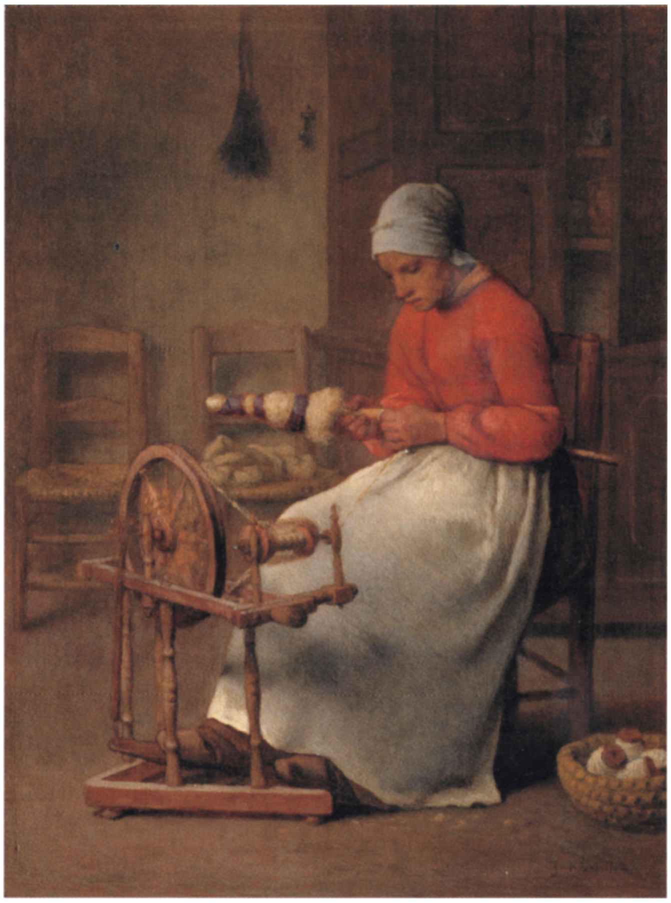


27
Cham
From "L'Exposition de 1863,
photographié par Cham, numéro quatre,"
Le Charivari, May 24, 1863
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

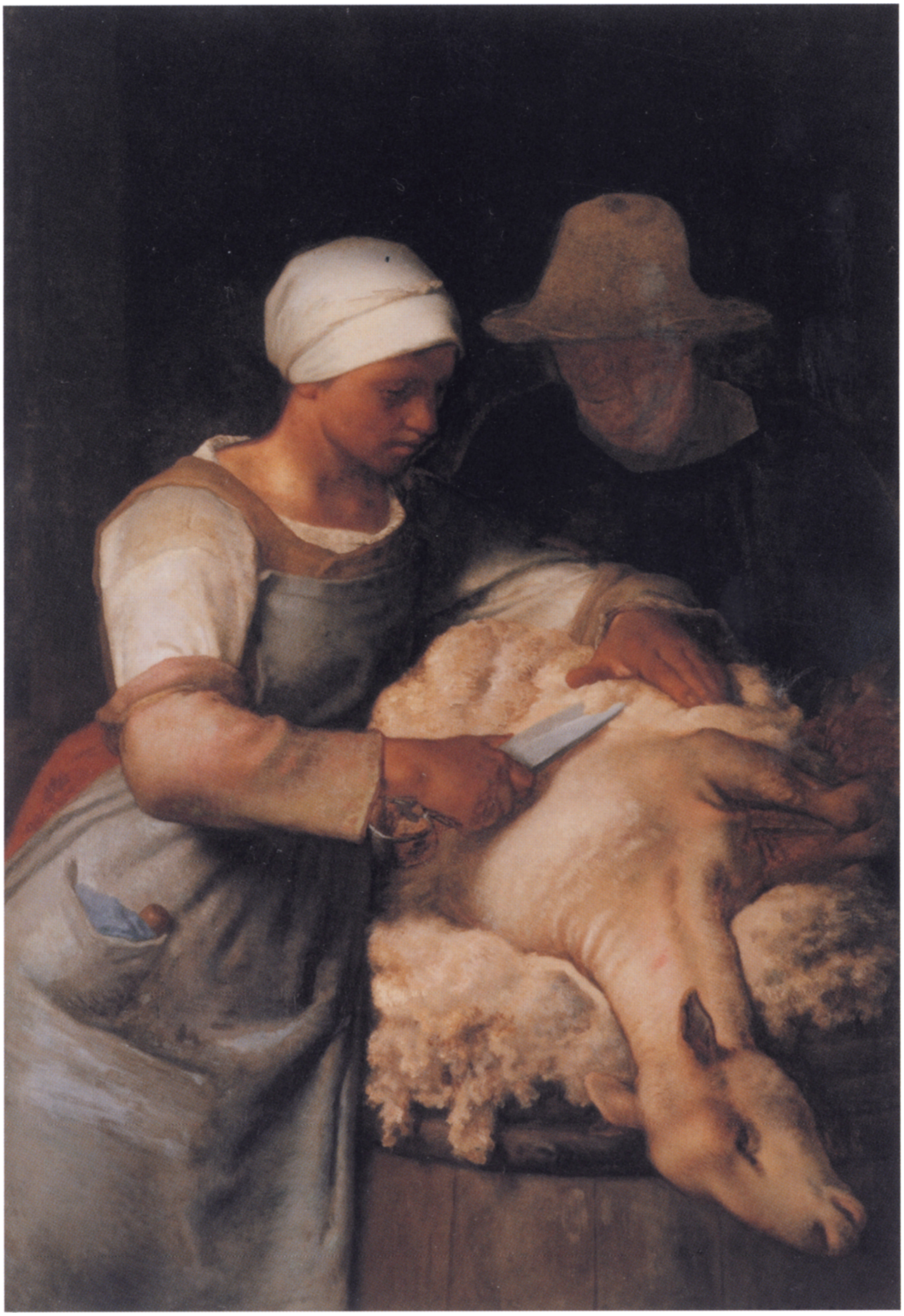
Women's Labor

One of the most notable aspects of Millet's output is his exceptional interrogation of the theme of women's rural labor. Millet, who had six daughters, painted milkmaids, apple gatherers, washerwomen, butter churners, firewood gatherers, and shepherdesses. Female rural workers were very poorly paid, earning between thirty and sixty centimes a day—around half the amount earned by male workers.[78] They were crucial, however, in the workings of the farm, and particularly in the cycle surrounding the production of wool. Millet represented the different stages, from the tending of flocks to sheepshearing, carding, spinning, and knitting. Particularly notable was one of his largest images, *A Sheepshearer* (29), which he exhibited at the Salon in 1861. Here he represents a life-size female peasant, while her male colleague, who holds down the animal, stands behind in the shadows. The picture highlighted Millet's ability as a colorist, particularly in the accents of pink on the woman's sleeve and the silvery blue of the shears. Millet admired the work of the Venetian School and wrote of his particular love for Titian's *Pastoral Concert* (*Fête champêtre*) (c. 1509, Musée du Louvre, Paris).[79] He also produced several images of carding, an activity in which women workers combed wool, and several paintings, drawings, and prints of women spinning wool into yarn, as in the colorful *Woman Spinning* (28), animated by accents of red and purple. This had a very personal resonance for Millet since his earliest memory was of hearing the spinning of his great-aunt at the family house in Gruchy,[80] and it was also an activity that faced increasing marginalization as a result of the rise of industrialized processes.[81] Other images, particularly of peasants in the remote region of Auvergne, which Millet visited in the mid-1860s, showed women using a distaff and spindle to spin yarn in the fields (32).

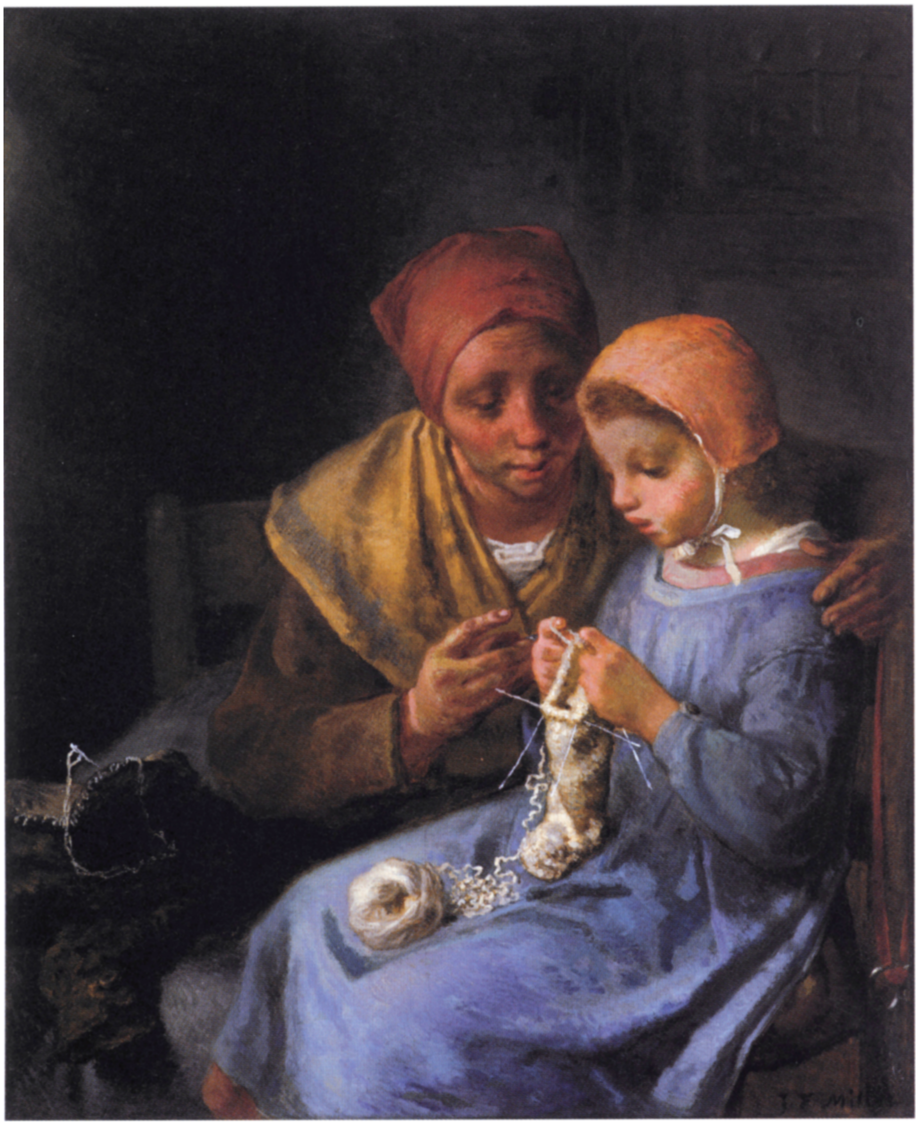
Finally, Millet produced several interior genre scenes around the theme of knitting, culminating in the figure painting *The Knitting Lesson* (30), which he showed at the 1869 Salon. This was the first genre picture of peasant life that he had exhibited at the Salon for five years, and it showed that his peasant imagery—even



28
Jean-François Millet
Woman Spinning, c. 1855–60
Oil on panel, 39.1 × 29.5 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown

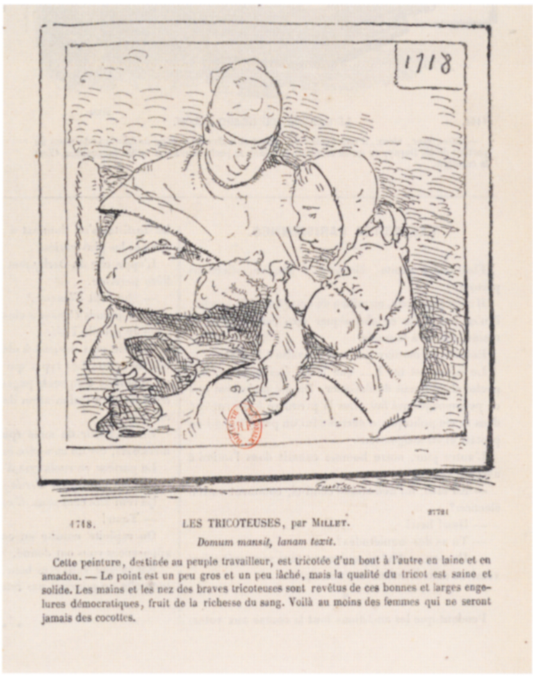


29
Jean-François Millet
A Sheepshearer, 1860
Oil on canvas, 165 × 110 cm
Hokugin Galerie Millet, Toyama



30
Jean-François Millet
The Knitting Lesson, 1869
Oil on canvas, 101.3 × 83.2 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
(Museum Purchase)

a work so seemingly inoffensive as this—still had the ability to shock. The picture was widely ridiculed and caricatured for its unidealized aspect. Bertall represented Millet's woman and child with sausage-like figures, joking that they had "democratic chilblains" (31).[82] Critics attacked the roughness of his paint surfaces. The journalist Louis Leroy compared his figures to flayed corpses.[83] In a later review, the same writer described the artist's facture as like currant jam.[84] Millet's supporters, however, praised his naturalism. Sensier pointed out his realistic rendering of tanned skin and chapped hands as a result of outdoor work.[85] Castagnary

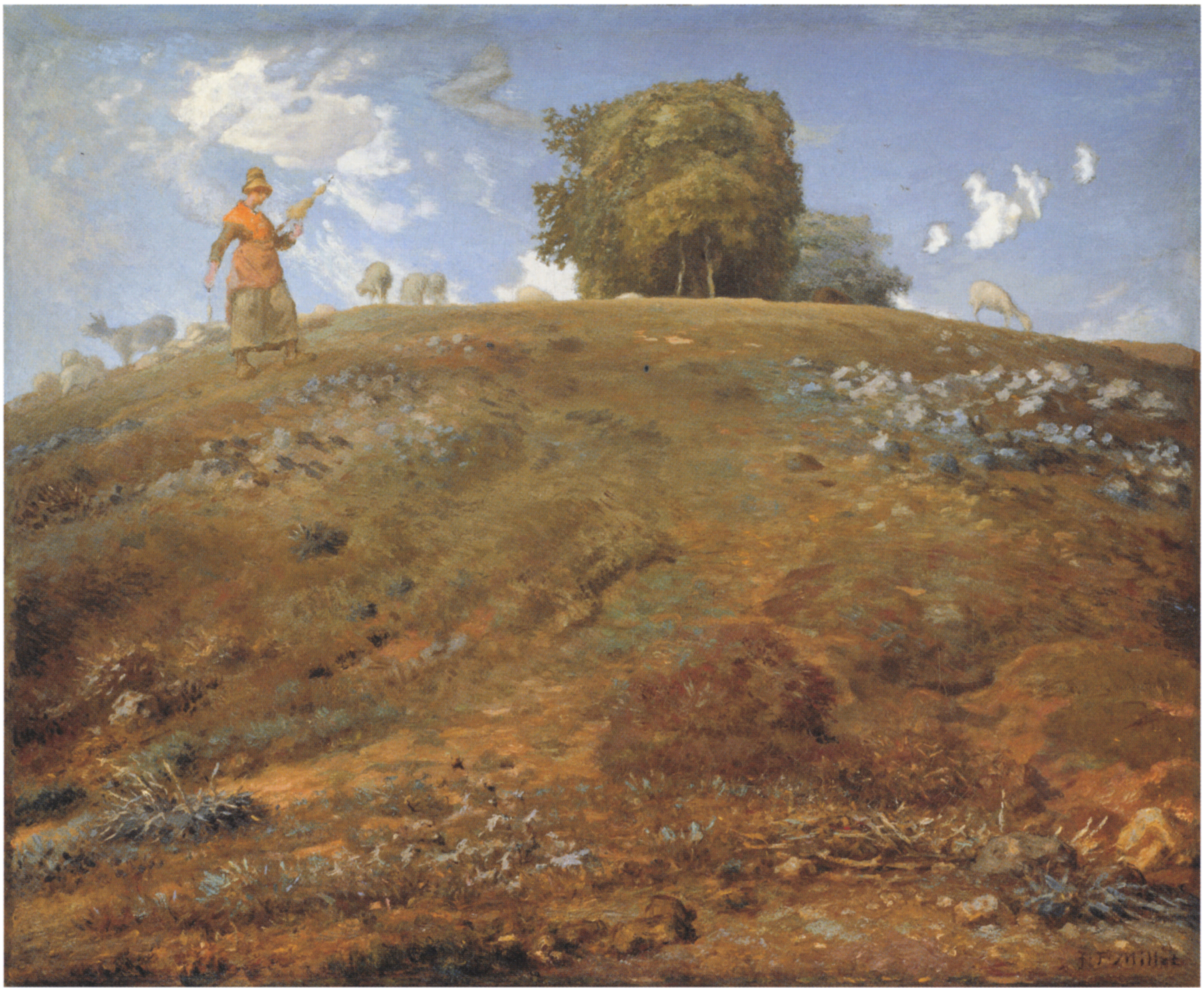


1718. LES TRICOTEUSES, par MILLET.

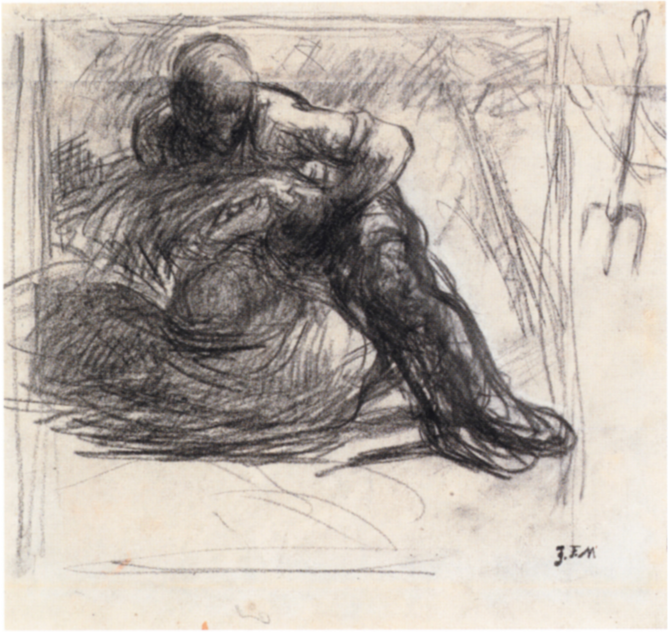
Domum mansit, lanam texit.

Cette peinture, destinée au peuple travailleur, est tricotée d'un bout à l'autre en laine et en amadou. — Le point est un peu gros et un peu lâché, mais la qualité du tricot est saine et solide. Les mains et les nez des braves tricoteuses sont revêtus de ces bonnes et larges engelures démocratiques, fruit de la richesse du sang. Voilà au moins des femmes qui ne seront jamais des cocottes.

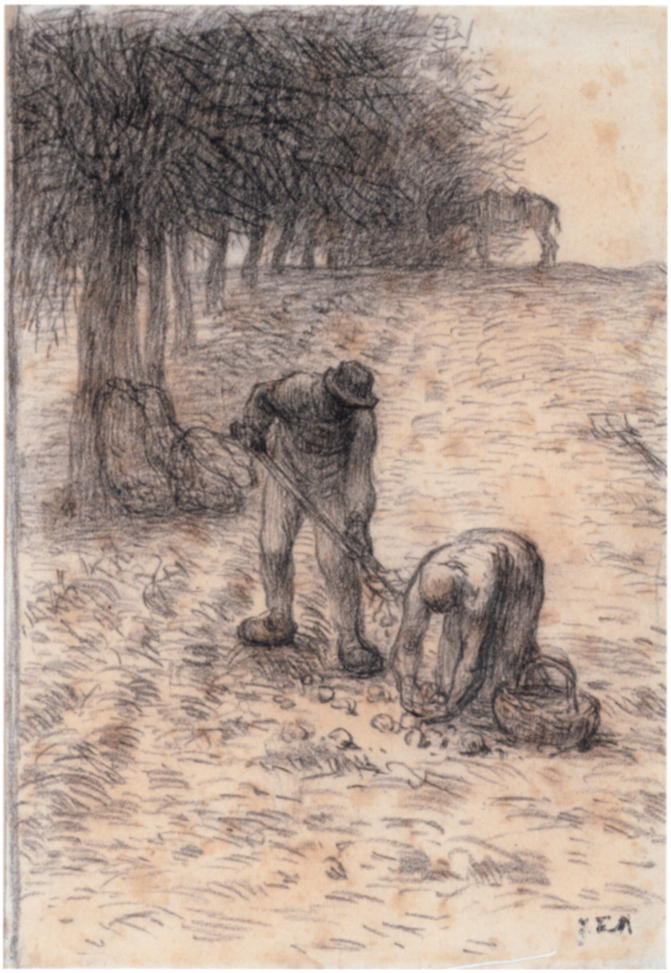
31
Bertall
The Knitters (Les Tricoteuses) (by Millet)
From *Le Journal amusant*, 15 May 1869, no. 698



32
Jean-François Millet
In the Auvergne, c. 1866–69
Oil on canvas, 81.5 × 99.9 cm
Art Institute of Chicago (Potter Palmer Collection)



33
Jean-François Millet
Man Harvesting Wheat, c. 1850
Black chalk on paper, 18.7 × 18.7 cm
Private collection

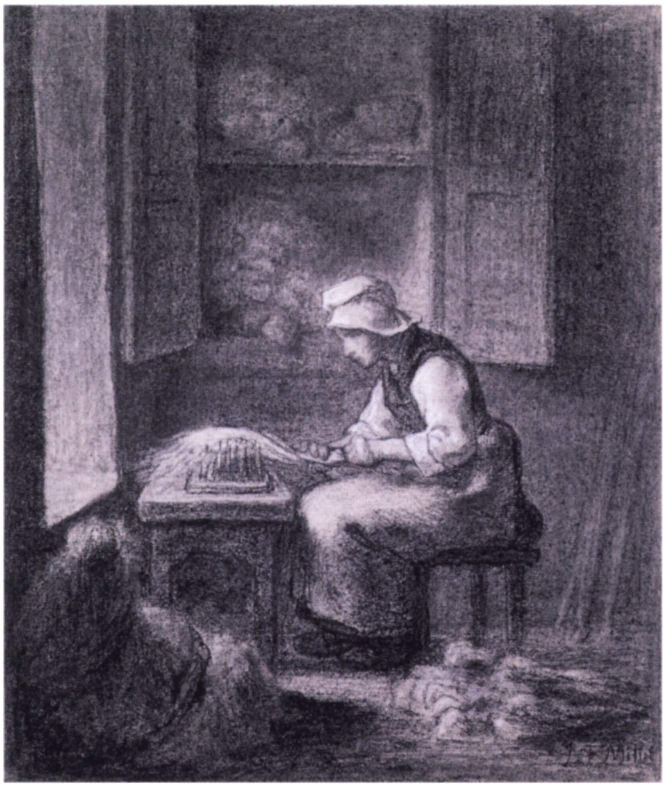


34
Jean-François Millet
Peasants Digging for Potatoes, 1862–66
Black chalk on paper, 19.5 × 13.5 cm
Private collection

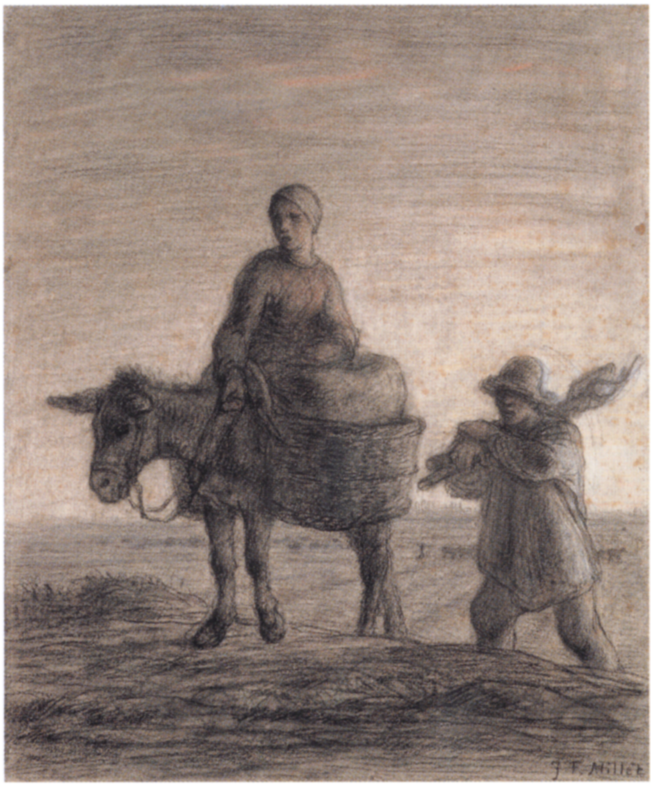
saw the picture as a secular, modernizing version of the Madonna and Child narrative; for him, this was an art of "humanity" that updated the tradition of Western religious painting, bringing solemn resonance to the rendering of the rural poor.[86]

Drawings and Pastels

Throughout his career, Millet was a prolific draughtsman. His drawings and pastels were often seen as more "modern" than his paintings by critics and artists of later generations, especially when they appeared at public exhibitions in the 1880s, notably his Ecole des Beaux-Arts retrospective in 1887 and a special display of drawings at the Exposition Universelle in 1889.[87] Some of his drawings are compositional studies rapidly sketched on bits of paper, while others are studies of individual figures for his painted compositions, as in *Man Harvesting Wheat* (33), a drawing for his *Trussing Hay* (*Les Botteleurs de foin*, 1850, Musée du Louvre, Paris). *Peasants Digging for Potatoes* (34) was probably a study for an unrealized picture. These drawings were generally intended as private study aids and often reveal Millet's interest in a graphic style with an anti-academic broken line. Millet often drew from life, using Barbizon peasants as his models. In addition, he produced large numbers of presentation drawings for the Parisian market in the 1850s. Among these were *The Carder* (35), *The Departure for Work* (36), and *The Washerwomen* (37). In the latter work, he silhouetted the forms of the women with a strong outline, creating abstracted forms. Millet was innovative in using waxy Conté crayon in many of his drawings instead of the more widely used charcoal. Rather than using techniques of rubbing and



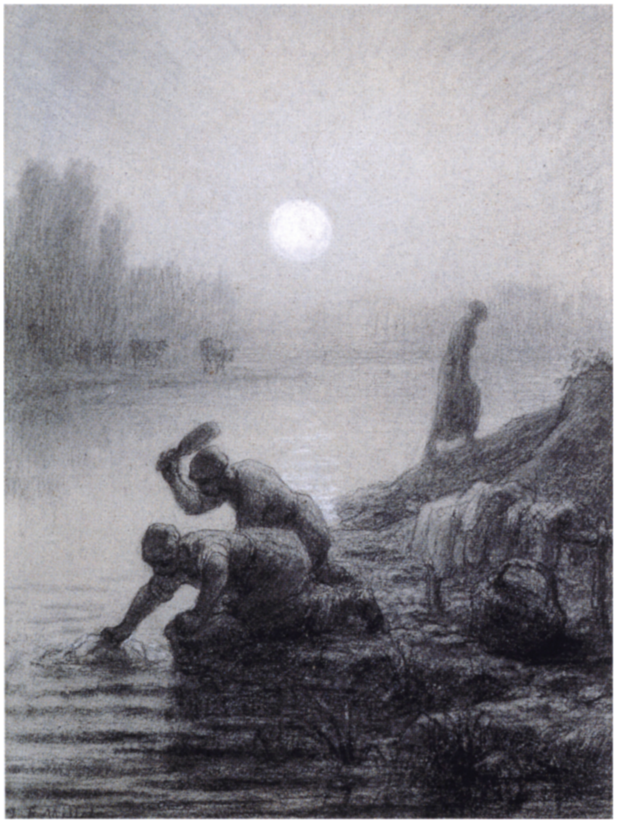
35
Jean-François Millet
The Carder, c. 1854
Crayon on paper, 31.1 × 26 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum (gift of Mr. and
Mrs. William N. Eisendrath Jr.)



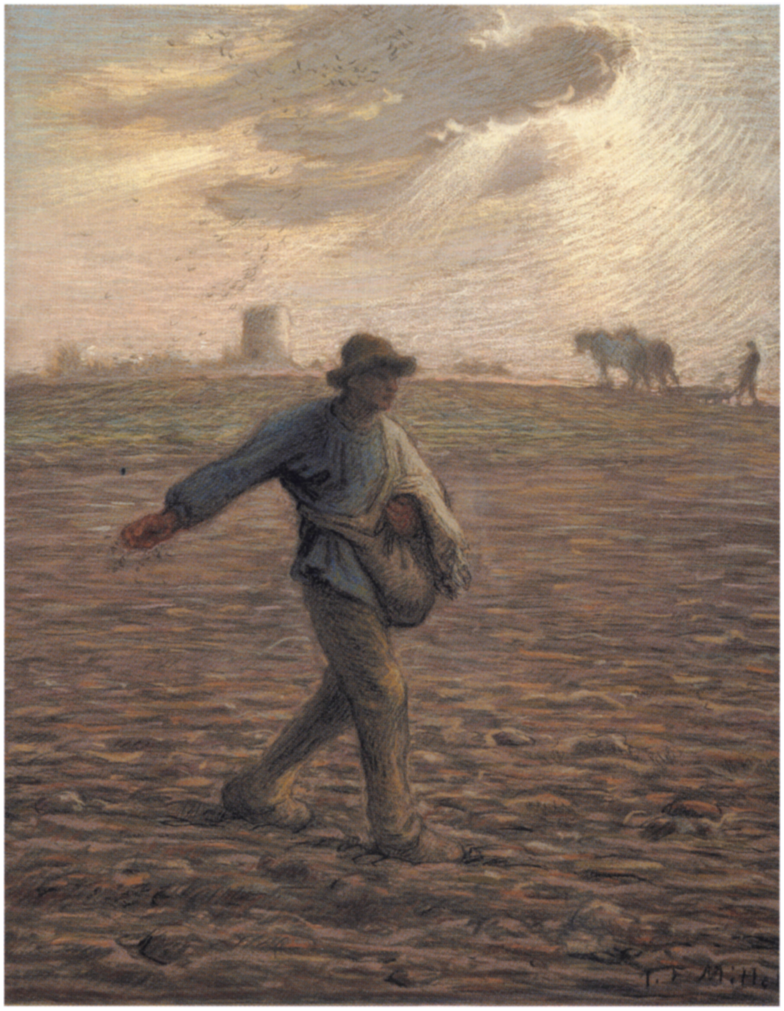
36
Jean-François Millet
The Departure for Work, 1857
Pastel and charcoal on paper, 34 × 28.3 cm
Art Institute of Chicago (gift of Dorothy
Braude Edinburg to the Harry B. and
Bessie K. Braude Memorial Collection)

smudging, he built up his surfaces with dense hatchings, sometimes leaving areas of white paper as light accents, or adding touches of white chalk.[88] Often, he would add overlays of colored pastel hatchings to subtly animate his monochrome palette, as in *Twilight* (c. 1859–63, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). In the mid-1860s Millet also began to produce landscape drawings in pen and ink and watercolor, such as *Landscape, Vichy* (39). These were informed by his interest in Japanese prints and are notable for their innovative, quasi-abstract compositions, with high horizon lines and with the foreground often left completely empty.

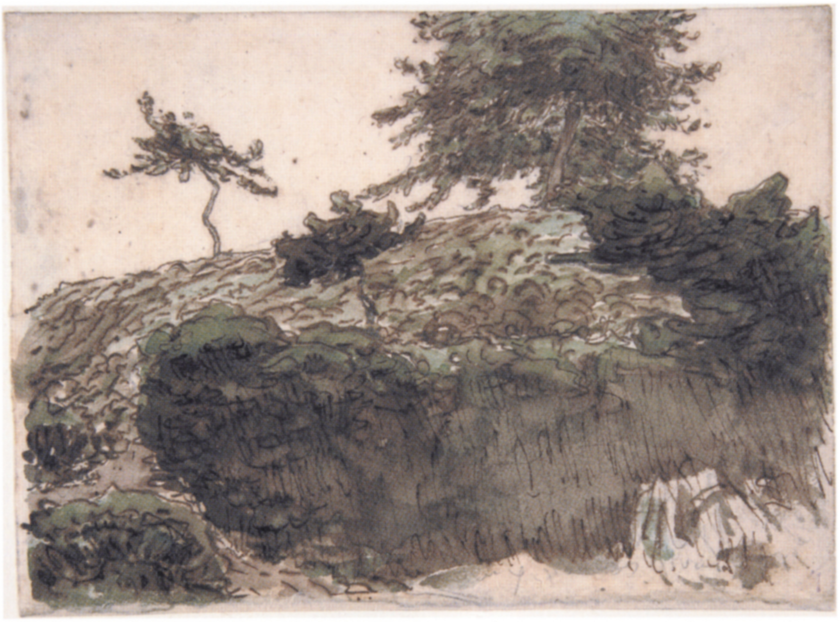
Around the same time, pastel began to become increasingly important for Millet. Crucial to his production was the patronage of the architect Emile Gavet, who paid him a monthly retainer between 1865 and 1870 to produce a regular output of pastels, leaving him full liberty in his choice of subjects.[89] These were often ambitious and large in scale, as in *The Mower* (40), after a detail from Pieter Bruegel's black and white print *Summer* (41).[90] Millet modernized his subject by drawing in color, using vibrant red, blue, green, and yellow cross-hatchings in the background. Many other images were pure landscapes, among them views of minimalist expanses such as *La Plaine* (50). Here, diagonals in the ground and the sky—a favored technique of Millet's—create a strong sense of spatial recession.[91] Millet also frequently reprised earlier subjects. *The Sower* (38) of about 1865 transposed the subject of his earlier paintings from the setting of Normandy to the plain of Chailly at Barbizon. Here he used a rich range of pastel tones over an underdrawing of black crayon.



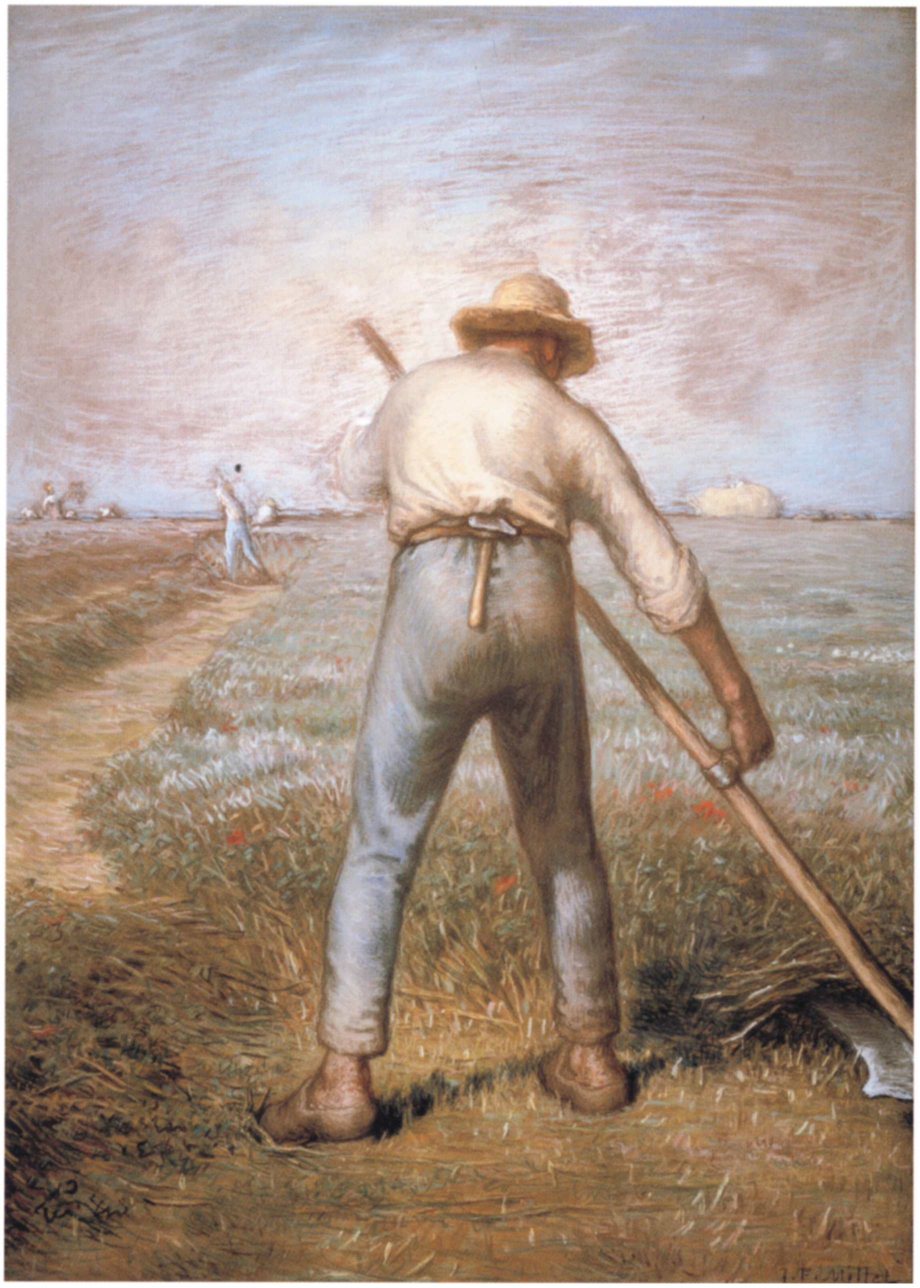
37
Jean-François Millet
The Washerwomen, c. 1857–60
Black crayon on paper, 38.1 × 28.6 cm
Hokugin Galerie Millet, Toyama



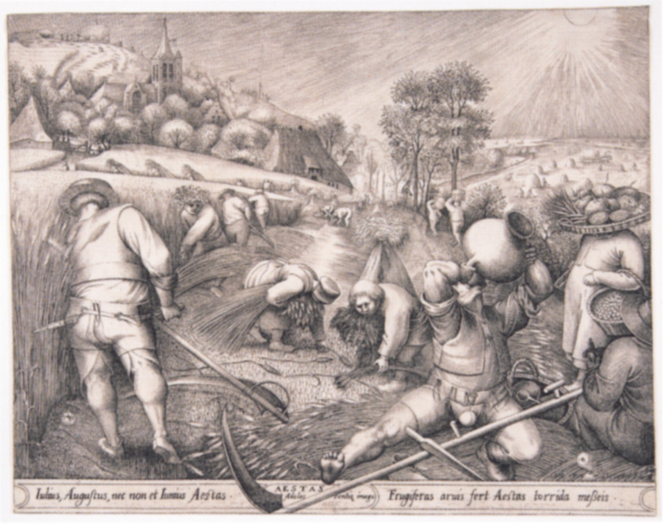
38
Jean-François Millet
The Sower, c. 1865
Pastel and Conté crayon on paper,
47 × 37.5 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute,
Williamstown (gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman
Hirschel)



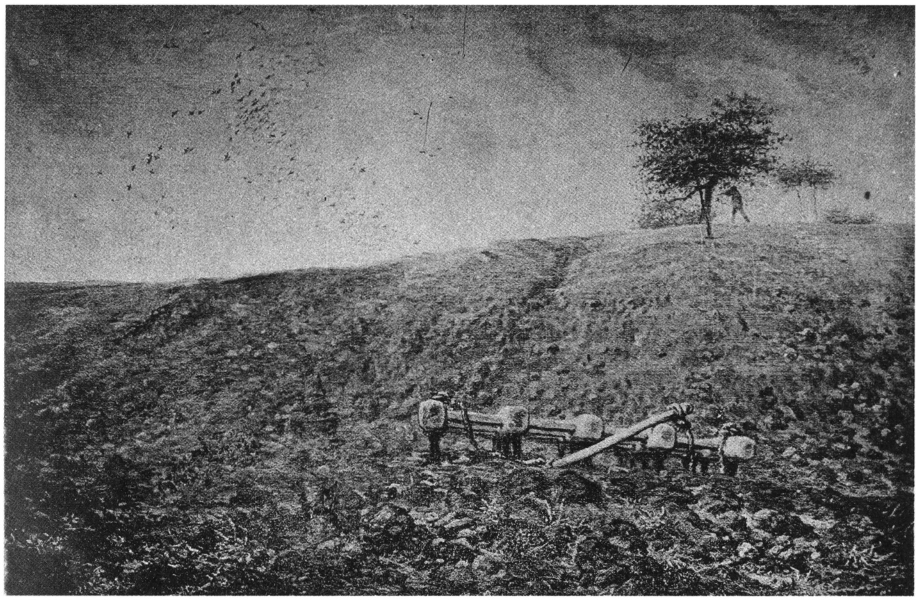
39
Jean-François Millet
Landscape, Vichy, c. 1866–67
Pen and ink on paper, 11.3 x 15.5 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(bequest of Gregoire Tarnopol, 1979,
and gift of Alexander Tarnopol, 1980)



40
Jean-François Millet
The Mower, 1866–67
Pastel on paper, 96 × 68 cm
Hiroshima Museum of Art


Iulius, Augustus, nec non et Iunius Aestas
AESTAS
Frugiferas aruis fert Aestas torrida messeis

41
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Summer (Aestas), from the series
The Seasons, 1570
Engraving, 22.5 × 28.7 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1926)

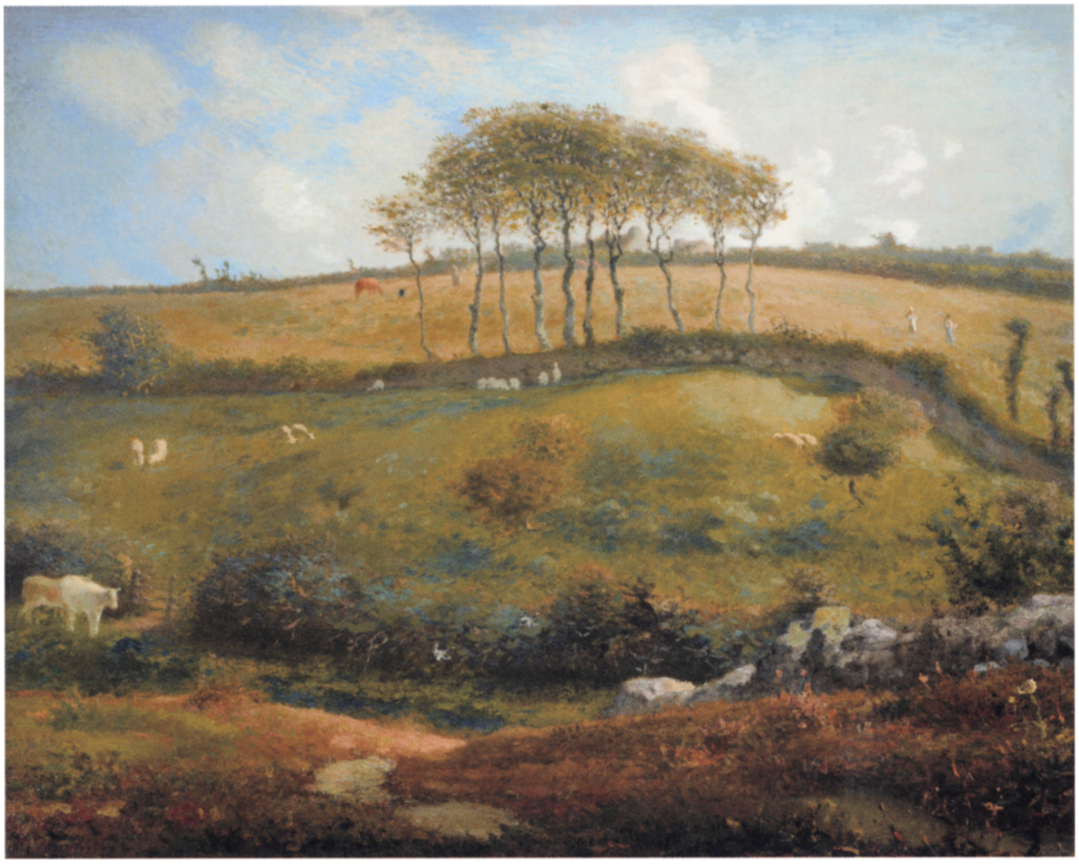


42
Jean-François Millet
November, Salon of 1870
Oil on canvas, 97 × 144 cm
Destroyed
From E. Moreau-Nélaton, *Millet raconté par lui-même*, Paris 1921, vol. 3, fig. 259

Landscapes

In the final decade of his life, Millet focused on landscape imagery, and he exhibited landscapes at the Salons of 1866, 1867, and 1870. Compositionally, Millet's landscapes are among his most formally radical works. It is here, perhaps more than in any of his other works, that a rupture between Millet's work and Western tradition is evident. Millet produced radical compositions with extreme cropping effects that often look more toward Eastern traditions—notably Japanese woodblock prints—than anything in Western art. Burty wrote of Millet: "No painter, in any school, has pushed further the study and the art of foregrounds. […] More clearly still than Théodore Rousseau, [Millet] has formulated this law of the summary and solid expansiveness of foregrounds that marks modern landscape with a recognizable stamp."[92] A fascination with looming foregrounds, as opposed to more conventional compositions organized around repoussoirs and gradual tonal recession, is a distinctive feature of these works, connecting Millet with the Impressionists, notably Camille Pissarro.

Millet admired nature deeply. He wrote to Sensier soon after moving to Barbizon in 1849: "If you could see how beautiful the forest is! I rush there at the end of the day, after my work, and I come back every time crushed. It is so calm, with such a terrible grandeur, that I find myself really frightened."[93] In his peasant images of the 1850s, the landscape setting was often a crucial accompaniment to the figures, as in *Sheepfold, Moonlight* (149), where a shepherd corrals a flock into a pen on the plain of Chailly. Millet studied the night sky carefully, as is evident here in the careful rendering of the



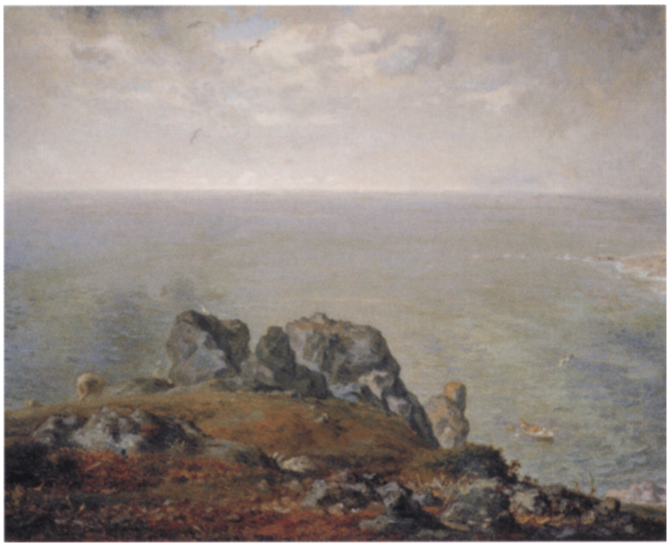
43
Jean-François Millet
Pasture near Cherbourg (Normandy), 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92.4 cm
Minneapolis Institute of Art (bequest of Mrs. Erasmus C. Lindley in memory of her father, James J. Hill)

gibbous moon. He read articles on astronomy, informing his dramatic *Starry Night* (1850–65, Yale University Art Gallery).[94] By the mid-1860s, the landscape itself was becoming the dominant player in his compositions. The artist's brother Pierre noted Millet's penchant for rendering the plains around Barbizon. These reminded the painter of the open expanses of sea that he had experienced in his youth.[95] In *Winter* (133), exhibited at the 1867 Salon, he depicted an abandoned plough and harrow on the plain of Chailly. In this minimal landscape he focused on the earth in the foreground and on the slight curve of the horizon. According to the American artist Edward Wheelwright, who visited Millet's studio regularly in the mid-1850s, Millet felt that "every glimpse of the horizon, however narrow, should be felt to be a segment of the great circle that bounds our vision."[96] Millet's fascination with open plains culminated in *November* (42), a work in which the earth rises up toward a distant horizon where a man shoots at a flock of crows.[97] When it was shown at the 1870 Salon—the final Salon at which Millet appeared—the young avant-garde critic Théodore Duret praised the representation of an earth that "the eyes of artists had never yet been lowered to see" and noted that there was "nothing greater in the whole modern school."[98] The landscape painter Jules Dupré was equally effusive: "It's the most beautiful landscape that has been painted," he wrote. "For twenty years, I have known nothing that surpasses it."[99] Millet's subversive focus on the earth is also evident in *In the Auvergne* (32). Rather than emphasizing the picturesque goat girl who spins a length of wool, he focused on rendering a steep rock face of earth, weeds, and thistles, rising to a high horizon. In *Pasture near Cherbourg (Normandy)* (43) too, he emphasized the nuanced complexities of the land. As Joris-Karl Huysmans would write at Millet's retrospective exhibition in Paris in 1887, "For the majority of landscapists, the earth is superficial; for Millet it has profundity."[100]

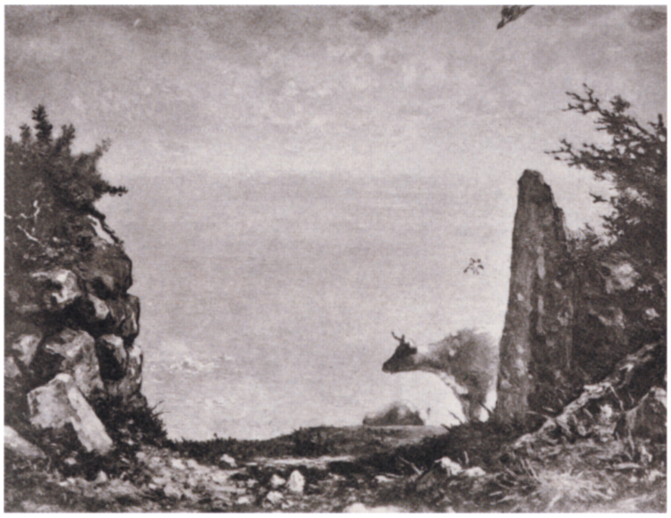
Millet's radicalism in his landscape work is also evident in his late marine paintings, showing the coast around Gruchy where he grew up. He later recounted his experience of a terrible storm off that coast in which several ships were lost. He remembered: "Since that time I have seen many tempests in my country, but none have left me with such an image of destruction, such an impression of the littleness of man and of the power of the sea."[101] There was little precedent for painting the remote coastline around Gruchy, and in so doing Millet created works of considerable originality.[102] In his *Cliffs at Gruchy* of 1870–71 (44) he depicted the pyramidal outcrop just to the north of the village, rendering this view—animated by wheeling gulls, sheep, and a rowing boat—in a range of turquoises, lavenders, greens, and pinks. Millet reduced his composition to the three principal areas of earth, sea, and sky. Théophile Silvestre described the picture as a "moving triple portrait of these three elements" and went on to assert that Millet had arrived "at the pinnacle of his career," writing that "the more he simplifies, the more he moves one."[103] Another innovative marine, the *Cliffs at Gruchy* of 1874 (45), represents a view toward the sea and distant horizon as seen through a gateway, with the cropped body of a cow visible. Sensier saw this work in Millet's studio in 1874 and noted its "extraordinarily powerful use of color."[104] Millet's largest picture of the coastline, *Cliffs at Gréville* (46), a dramatic view of the receding cliffs, was described by the painter Charles Tillot as the "crowning" of Millet's landscape efforts when it appeared in the artist's studio sale in 1875.[105]

"That Great Poet": The Late Reception

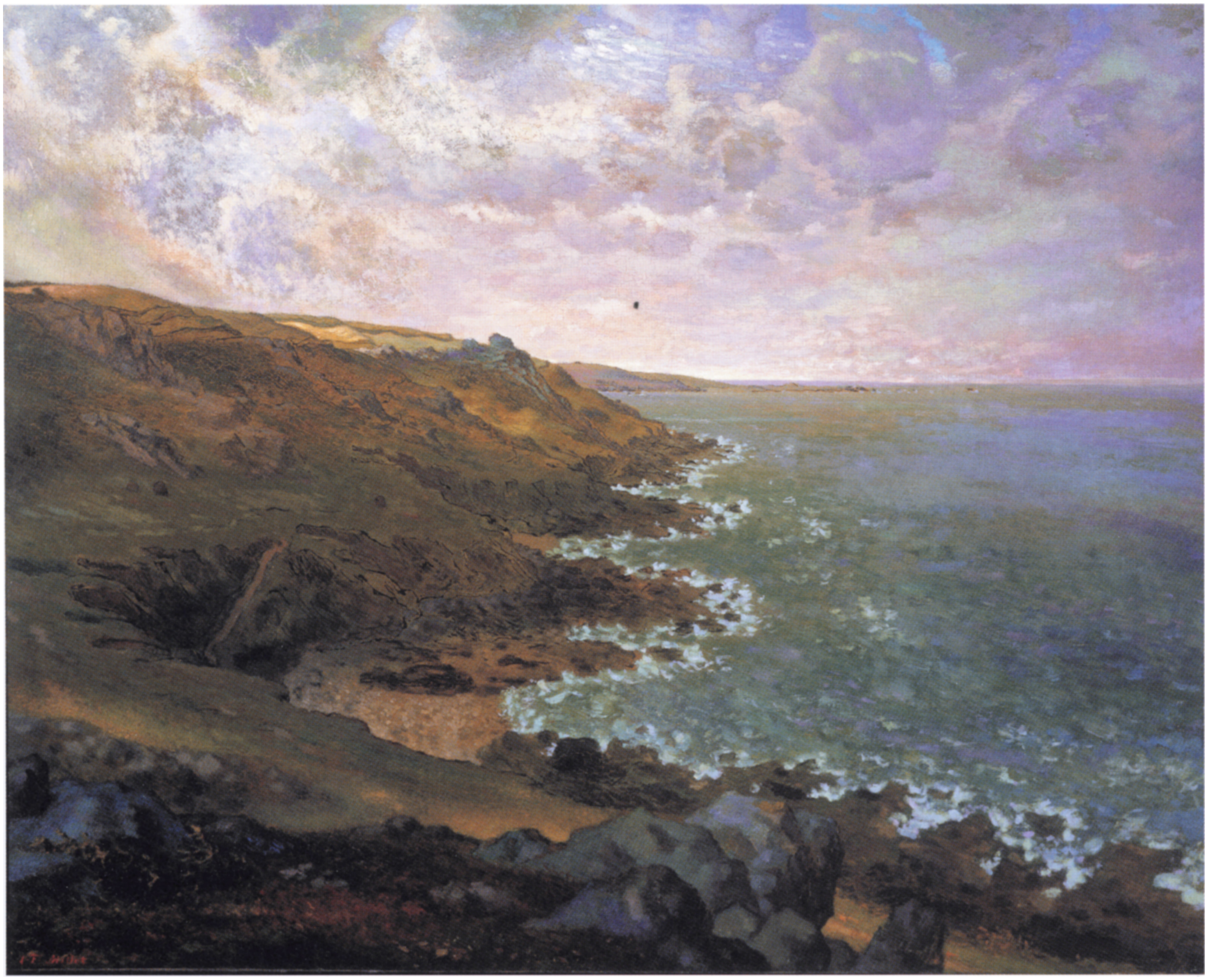
By the end of his career Millet was a wealthy man. In the early 1870s his paintings were selling for considerable amounts, largely as a result of the patronage of the dealers Paul Durand-Ruel and Hector Brame, who sought to build



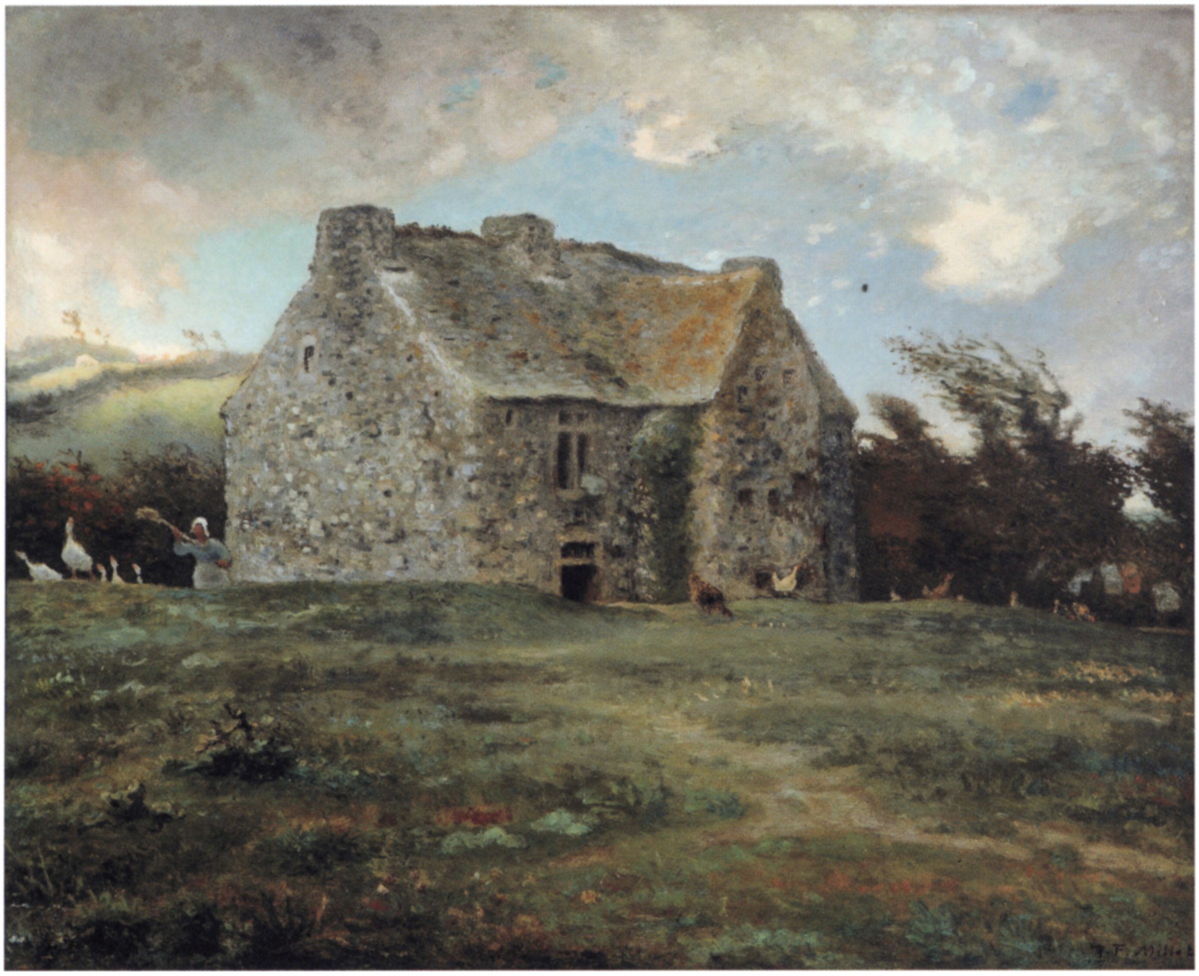
44
Jean-François Millet
Cliffs at Gruchy, 1870–71
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73.9 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian Shaw Haughton)



45
Jean-François Millet
Cliffs at Gruchy, 1874
Oil on canvas, 74 × 92 cm
Present location unknown
From E. Moreau-Nélaton, *Millet raconté par lui-même*, Paris 1921, vol. 3, fig. 295



46
Jean-François Millet
The Cliffs of Gréville, 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 93.3 × 116.5 cm
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
(Elisabeth H. Gates Fund, 1919)

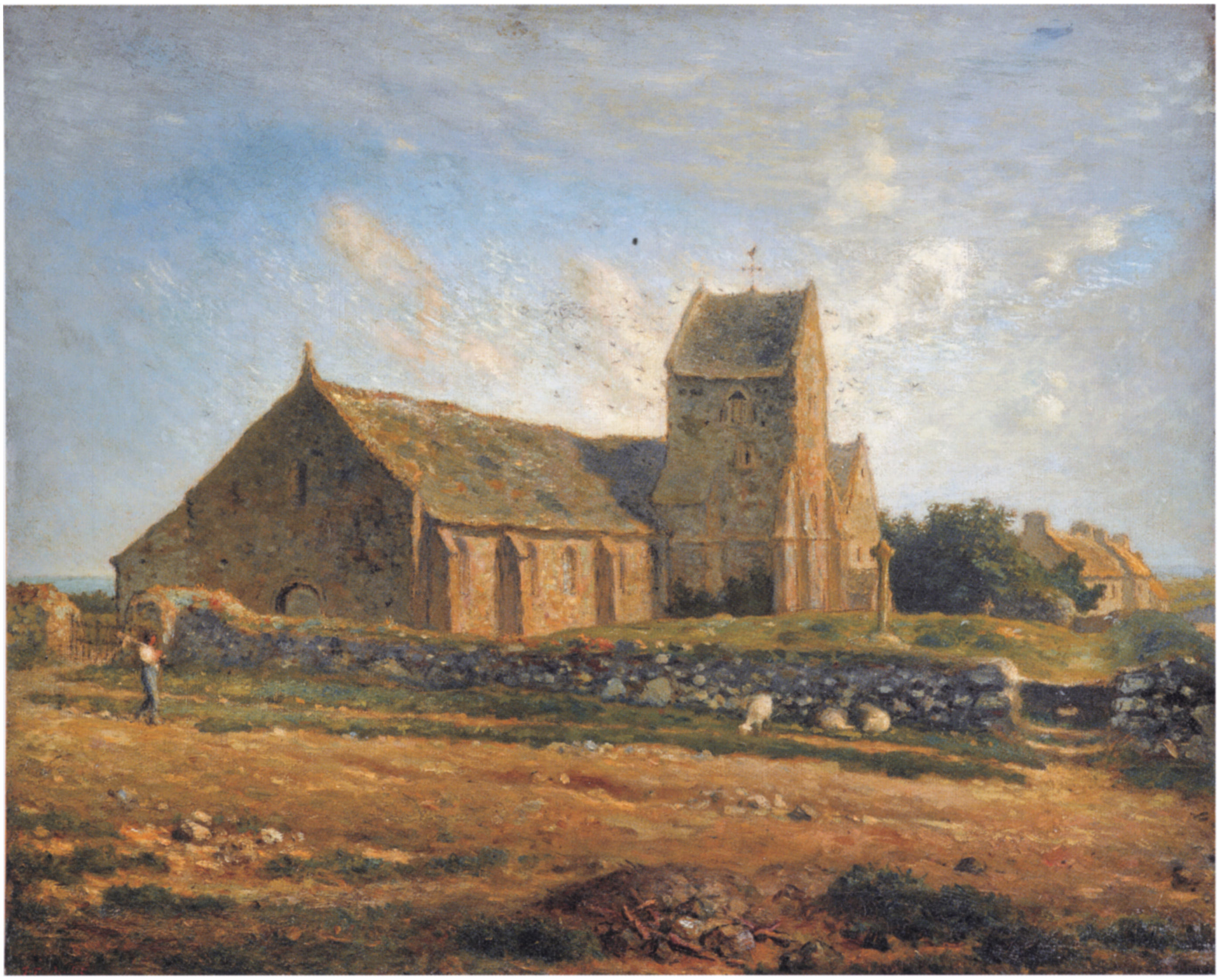


47
Jean-François Millet
Old House at Nacqueville, c. 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 65 × 82 cm
Private collection

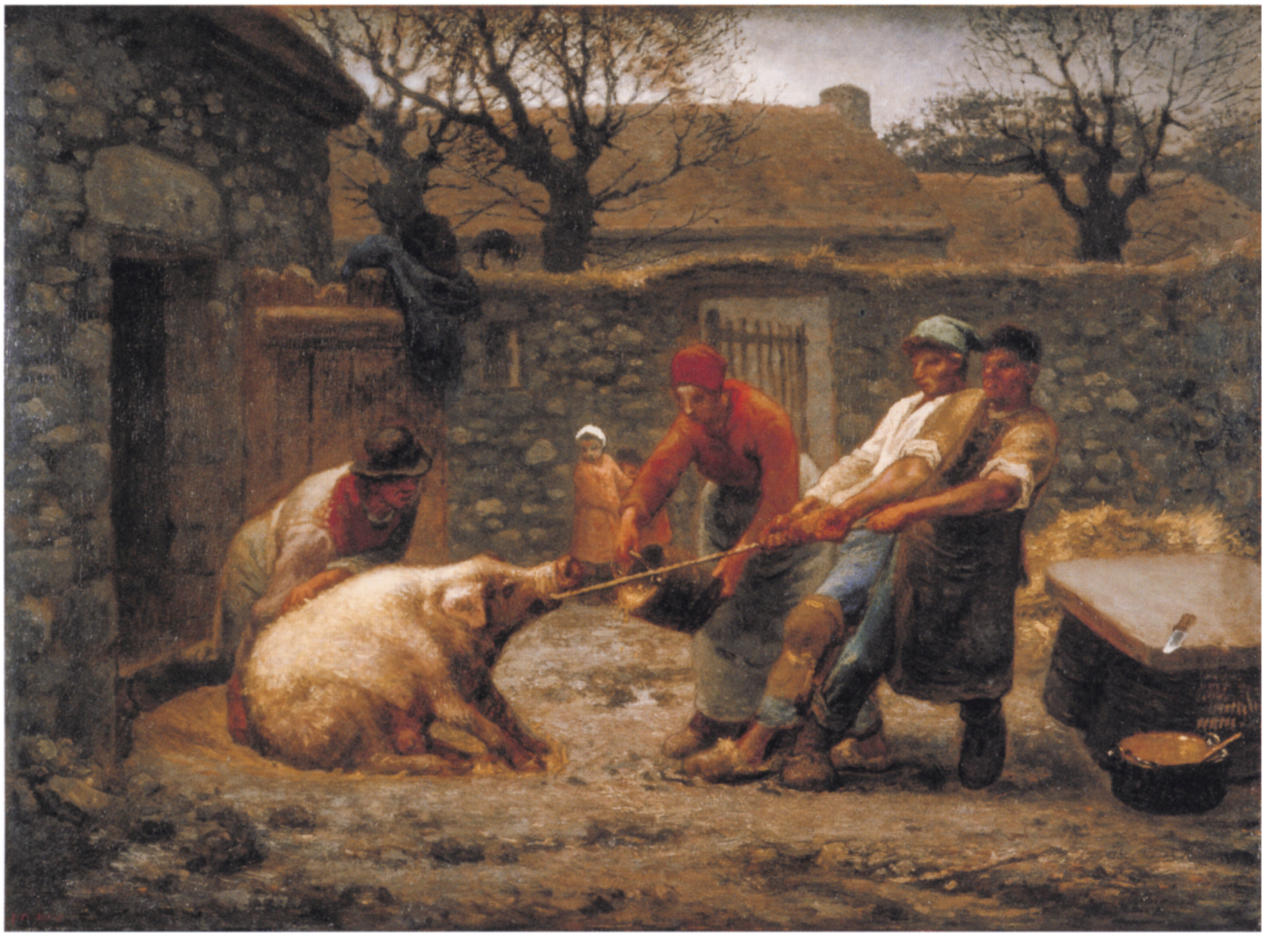
a monopoly on his production.[106] In 1872 alone Millet sold five paintings to Durand-Ruel, for a total of 40,000 francs. These included *In the Auvergne* (32) for 10,000 francs, *Woman Sewing by Lamplight* (1870–72, Frick Collection, New York) for 14,000 francs, and probably *Old House at Nacqueville* (47) for 10,000 francs.[107] His work was also widely reproduced, with twenty-nine prints after his images included in the six-volume catalogue of his stock that Durand-Ruel published in 1873.[108]

Millet died at the age of sixty in January 1875. In the months that followed, a remarkable amount of his work was on view in Paris. In the spring the prominent dealer Francis Petit organized an exhibition of selected pastels from the collection of Emile Gavet that revealed, for the first time, the full importance of this aspect of Millet's production.[109] In May the artist's posthumous sale included a wide range of nudes, peasant subjects, and landscapes.[110] Among these were major works such as *The Pig Killers* (49), which achieved the top price of the sale at 24,000 francs, and the unfinished *The Peasant Family* (82). The state bought the late painting *Church at Gréville* (48) as well as *Two Bathers* (64), and these were placed on view at the Musée du Luxembourg, the state museum of contemporary art, ensuring that they became among Millet's best-known works.[111] Soon after, Gavet sold off his collection of ninety-five pastels by Millet at an auction that attracted considerable commercial interest.

In the years to come there were several exhibitions of Millet's works in Paris. In 1878, sixty-one of his paintings appeared in Durand-Ruel's gallery in a large retrospective of the "School of 1830"—a term used in France to



48
Jean-François Millet
Church at Gréville, 1871–74
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73.4 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



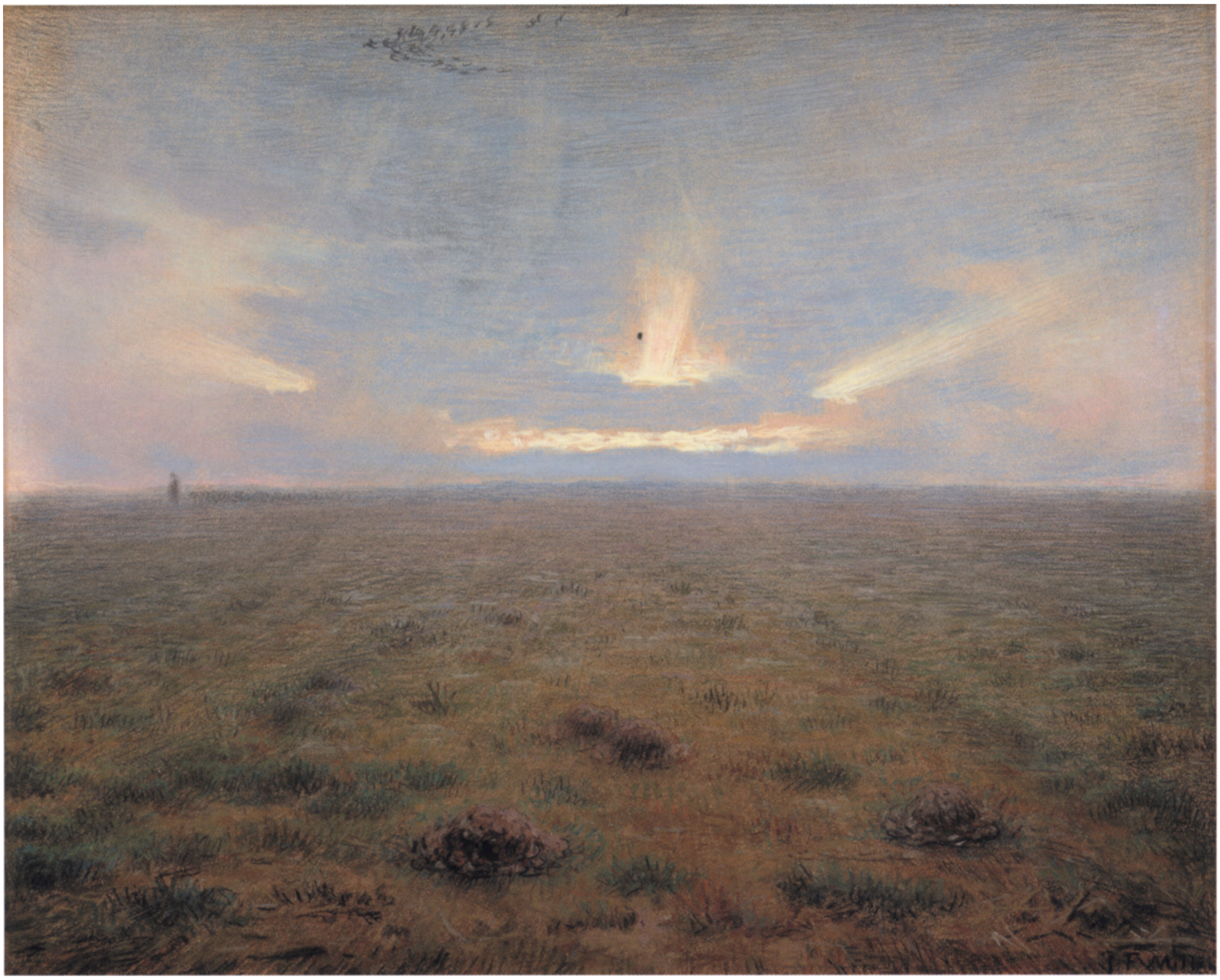
49
Jean-François Millet
The Pig Killers, 1867–70
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92.7 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

reference those naturalistic landscape and genre painters who had emerged in the wake of the Revolution of 1830. Thereafter, his works appeared regularly in group shows and at auctions such as that of his Alsatian patron Frédéric Hartmann in 1881. A solo retrospective in 1887 was followed by a significant exhibition of thirteen paintings and thirty drawings at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. In addition, his imagery was widely disseminated through prints and photography, particularly in the albums of Adolphe Braun, whose son Gaston had first photographed Millet's images in the late 1860s.

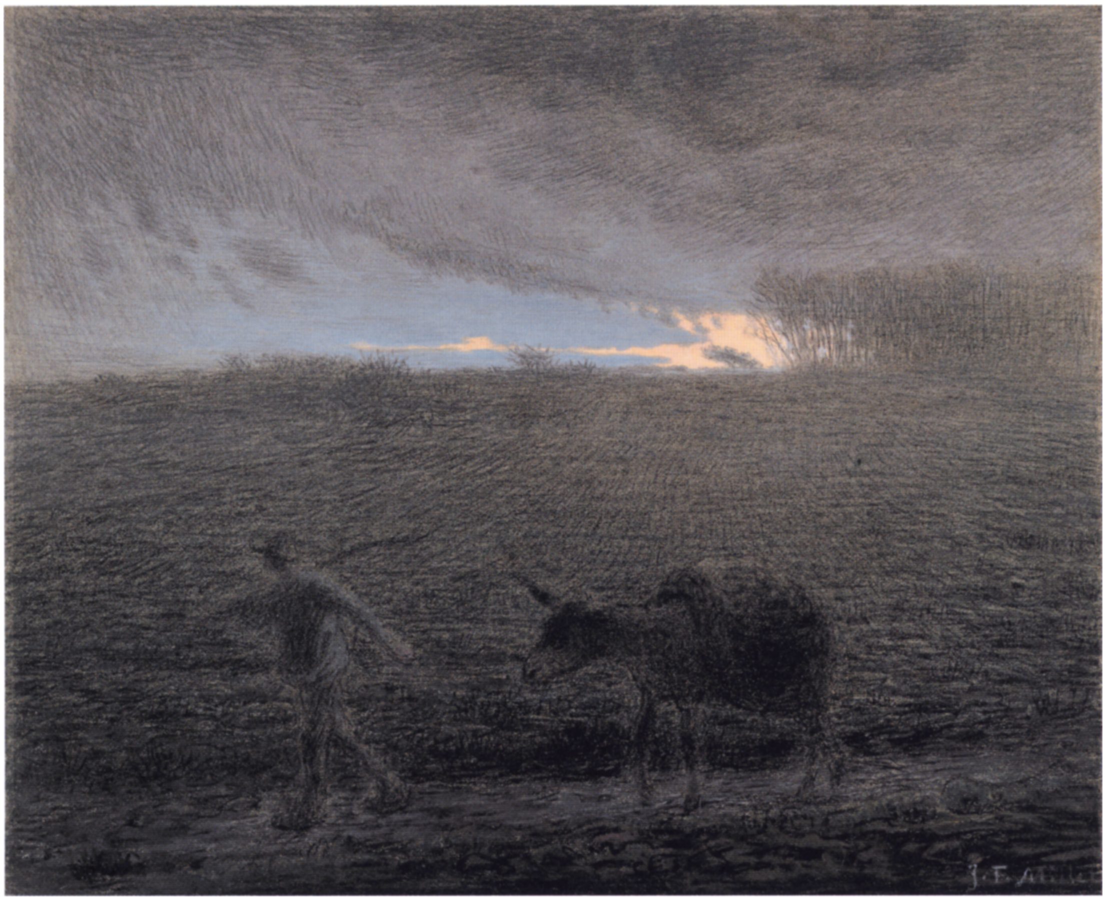
Over the course of his career, Millet emerged as a rustic outsider whose work carried a message of support for the virtues of rural life and, at the same time, an implicit critique of the growing urban, industrialized economy that threatened this way of life. It is possible to see his work as conservative in its screening out of modern elements in the landscape such as tourism and industrialization, and its avoidance of modern forms of labor such as factory work. Yet Millet's art was at the same time undeniably subversive in its in-depth exploration of peasant existence and his particular focus on the hardships of rural life. His advocacy of the moral value of agrarian labor carried a radical charge at a time of increasing urban wealth, often as a result of financial speculation. In formal terms, his art was innovative in its anti-academic, brute technique and his abstract approach to form and composition. Despite the eventual institutional acceptance of Millet's art in the 1880s, for many critics, writers, and artists his work continued to carry an air of radicalism. In 1881 the critic Paul Eudel described Millet as "this artistic fauve," notably using a term that would come to be indelibly associated with a later group of radical artists.[112] In 1889 Paul Gauguin commented: "what insults didn't they heap on that great poet who nearly died of hunger."[113] He situated Millet within a group of avant-garde artists who had been marginalized in their lifetime, "Among that pleiad of unsung thinkers with royal instinct: Rousseau, Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Courbet, Manet, all of them scorned in their day."[114] Within this tradition Millet developed his own art of invention that united formal innovation and political resonance, and in so doing provided the foundation for a narrative of modern art that would emerge in the years after his death.

Millet and Impressionism

Simon Kelly



50
Jean-François Millet
The Plain, c. 1868
Pastel and black crayon over
graphite on paper, 50.1 × 62.2 cm
Private collection (courtesy of
Daniel Katz Ltd., London)



51
Jean-François Millet
Peasant and Donkey Returning Home at Dusk, c. 1866–68
Pastel and black chalk on paper, 41 × 50 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

On April 24, 1875, three months after Jean-François Millet's death, the progressive critic Philippe Burty reviewed the artist's exhibition of pastels from the collection of Emile Gavet. He wrote: "The younger men—especially the *intransigeants* or those who will not come to terms—admire him greatly and will get much out of him. Let them learn from him how to think, to compose, and to realize."[1] Burty's use of the term "intransigeants" was widely understood as a synonym for the Impressionists, who had held their first exhibition, creating some controversy, the previous year. The critic knew these young artists well, having recently written the introduction for the March 1875 auction sale organized by four of the most prominent members of the group: Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Berthe Morisot.

This essay examines the extent to which the Impressionists followed Burty's injunction "to think, to compose, and to realize" after the example of Millet's work. The artists who showed at the Impressionist Exhibitions were a diverse community, with some—notably Monet—favoring landscape and *plein air* painting, and others, notably Degas, favoring a "realist" aesthetic grounded in Parisian urban life. Many of them did speak about their relationship to Millet's work, although, despite the words of Burty, their comments were as frequently negative as positive, and were often limited in extent. Their relationship with the elder artist seems often to have been one of competition as much as emulation. Nonetheless, their art itself shows that they undeniably drew on the example of Millet, appropriating the work of their forebear and modernizing it in a new Impressionist language. In particular, they were influenced by Millet's penchant for radically unidealized subjects, such as everyday peasantry and bare expanses of land; his innovative compositions, especially his use of a high horizon line; and his rough paint surfaces that challenged traditional conventions of polished finish. Millet's use of color, particularly in his pastels, and his anti-academic drawing technique also informed the work of the Impressionists.

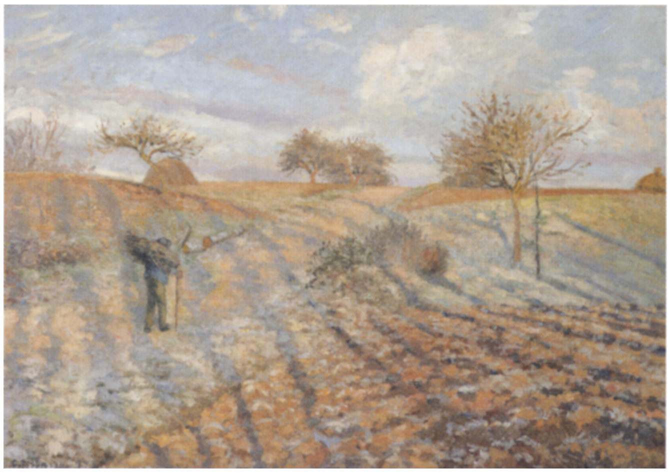
We have little evidence that the relatively unsocial Millet, sequestered at Barbizon, ever had direct contact with the central figures in the Impressionist group, and he never wrote about them in his voluminous correspondence.[2] Certainly he did share some of their interests, for example a fascination with the non-Western art form of Japanese woodblock prints. In 1866 he even spoke of his attempt to capture the "impression" he had of a sunset view outside Barbizon (51).[3] At times, too, although the fact has been largely overlooked, Millet painted oil studies outdoors, notably a group of views of the Normandy coast that appeared in his 1875 studio sale.[4]

The number of artists who showed in the Impressionist Exhibitions was significant, including not only those figures who are famed today but also several contributors who are now largely forgotten. At the first show in 1874, there were thirty exhibitors; in 1876, nineteen; and in 1877, eighteen. Millet was closely connected with two of the lesser-known contributors. At the Second Impressionist Exhibition, in 1876, Millet's younger brother and pupil Jean-Baptiste Millet, who had moved to Barbizon in the 1850s, showed ten paintings of rural scenes, including five watercolors. These now lost works hung in the first room of the exhibition. Millet's good friend Charles Tillot, an important member of the Barbizon community, showed at six of the eight Impressionist shows, including fourteen works at the 1877 exhibition.[5] Among these was a small view (present location unknown) of Millet's house and studio at Barbizon that the critic A. Descubes described as "the best landscape painting exhibited."[6] Tillot would go on to become a good friend of Degas.

Prominent critics in the Impressionist circle—including Burty, Théodore Duret, and Edmond Duranty—recognized Millet as an important antecedent of the Impressionists. In his seminal essay "The New Painting" (1876), Duranty wrote that "the great Millet" was a "Homer of the modern landscape, who looked at the sun until he became blind; who showed the laboring peasant like an animal among the oxen, pigs and sheep, who worshipped the *earth* and rendered it so simple, so noble, so rough, and covered with radiating light."[7] Many of the same collectors—the opera singer Jean-Baptiste Faure, for example—patronized both the work of Millet and that of the Impressionists. The dealer Paul Durand-Ruel was a key supporter of Millet, building up a virtual monopoly on the artist's work in the early 1870s, at the very same time that he was promoting the work of the young Impressionists.[8]

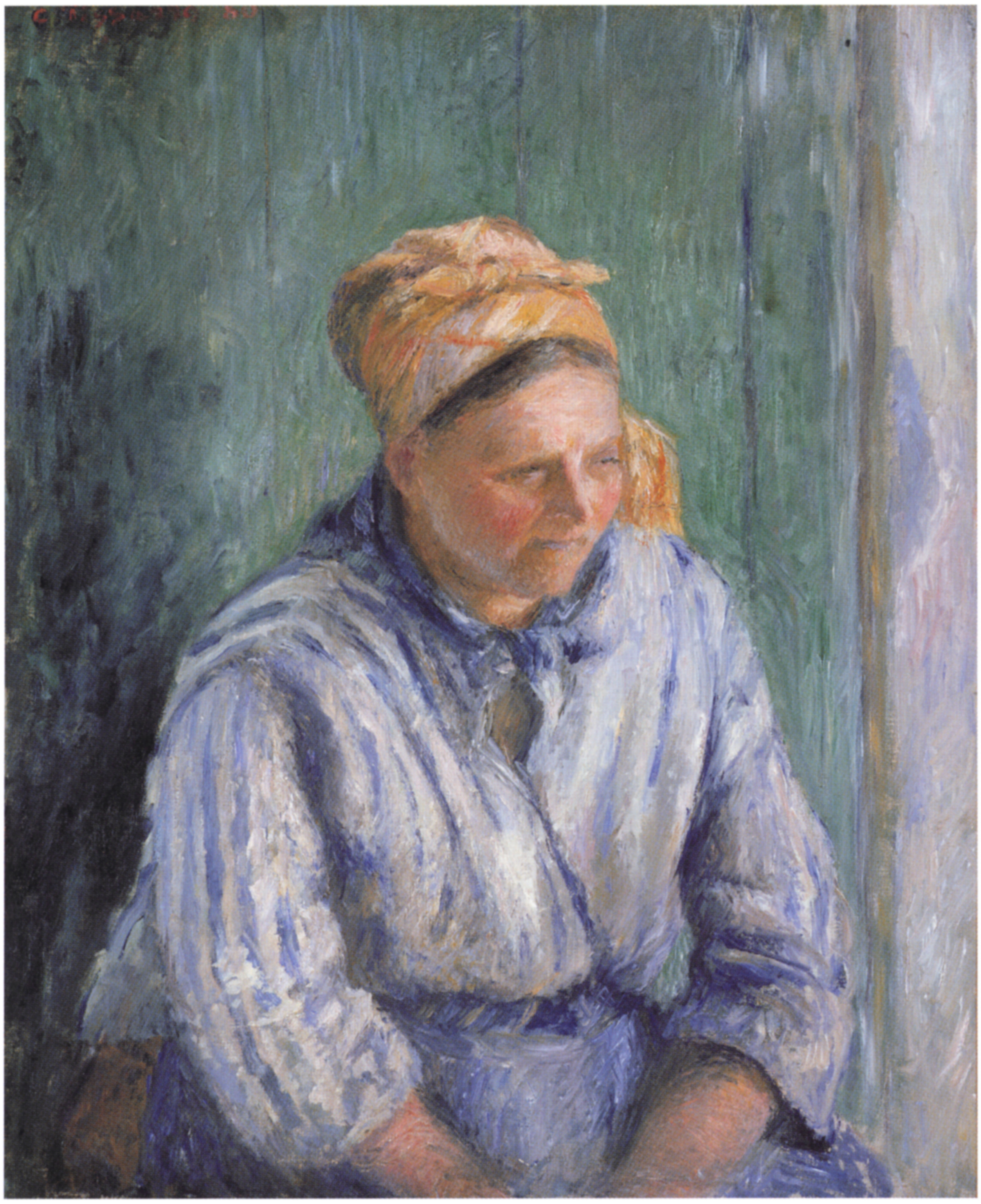
Pissarro and the Painting of Peasant Life

The oeuvre of Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) represents the most sustained engagement with Millet's imagery among the Impressionists.[9] Of all the artists in this group, Pissarro focused on the subject of peasantry the most consistently, and repeatedly treated themes that had earlier been favored by Millet, from sowing and gleaning to potato harvesting and apple picking. The British art historian T. J. Clark has written of Pissarro: "He knew that Millet was […] for him, an alter ego, without whom his painting would

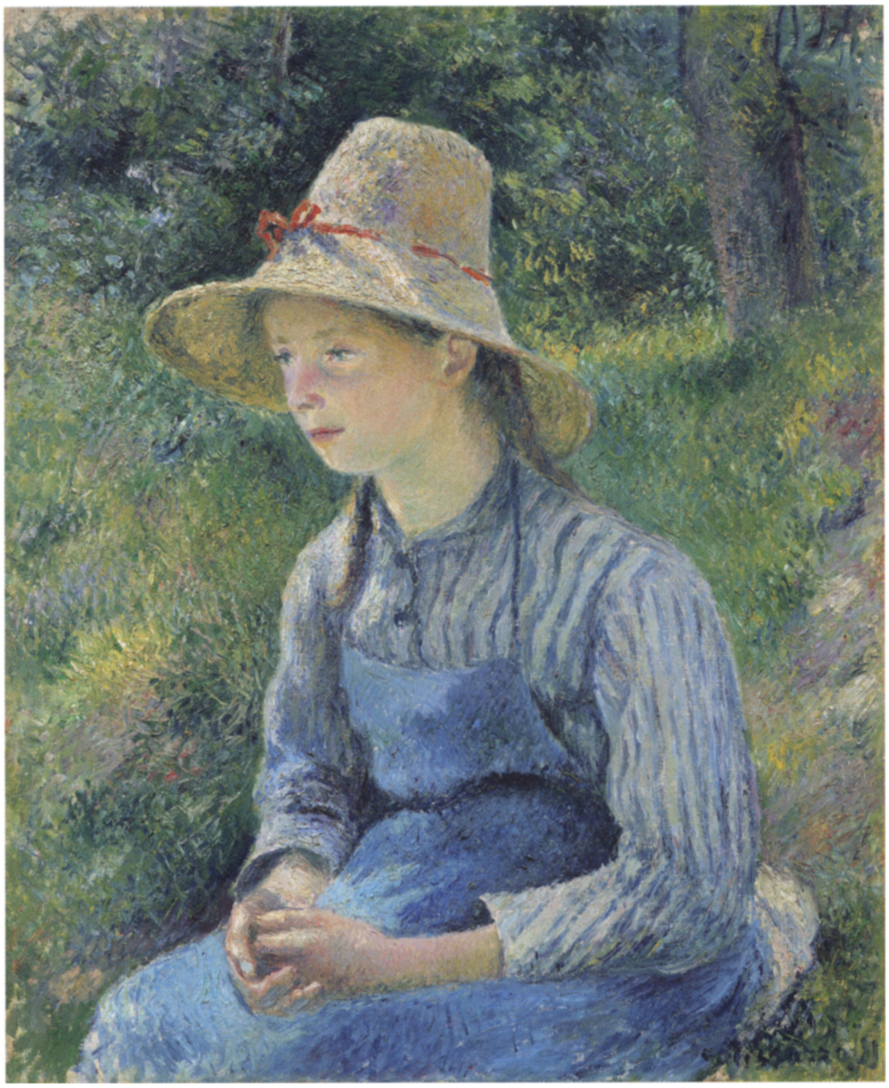


52
Camille Pissarro
White Frost, 1873
Oil on canvas, 65 × 93 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

not have existed."[10] Pissarro first systematically engaged with Millet's work in the early 1870s. His *White Frost* (52), a view of a wintry expanse of earth animated by a single faggot-gatherer, foregrounds the land in a way that resembles Millet's late landscapes such as *Winter* (133).[11] Pissarro's friend the critic Théodore Duret saw an analogy between Pissarro's subversive choice of seemingly mundane motifs and Millet's similarly "ignoble" subjects, as for example in the latter's "greatest landscape painting," *November* (42), which Duret described as a "simple area of fallow land."[12] Pissarro's engagement with Millet intensified in the mid-1870s when he began to visit the village of Montfoucault in eastern Brittany. This was a far more remote location than his home in Pontoise, to the north of Paris, and he described it as the "true countryside."[13] Encouraged by Duret, Pissarro focused more intently on local peasant life, representing



53
Camille Pissarro
Washerwoman, Study, 1880
Oil on canvas, 73 × 59.1 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nate B. Spingold, 1956)

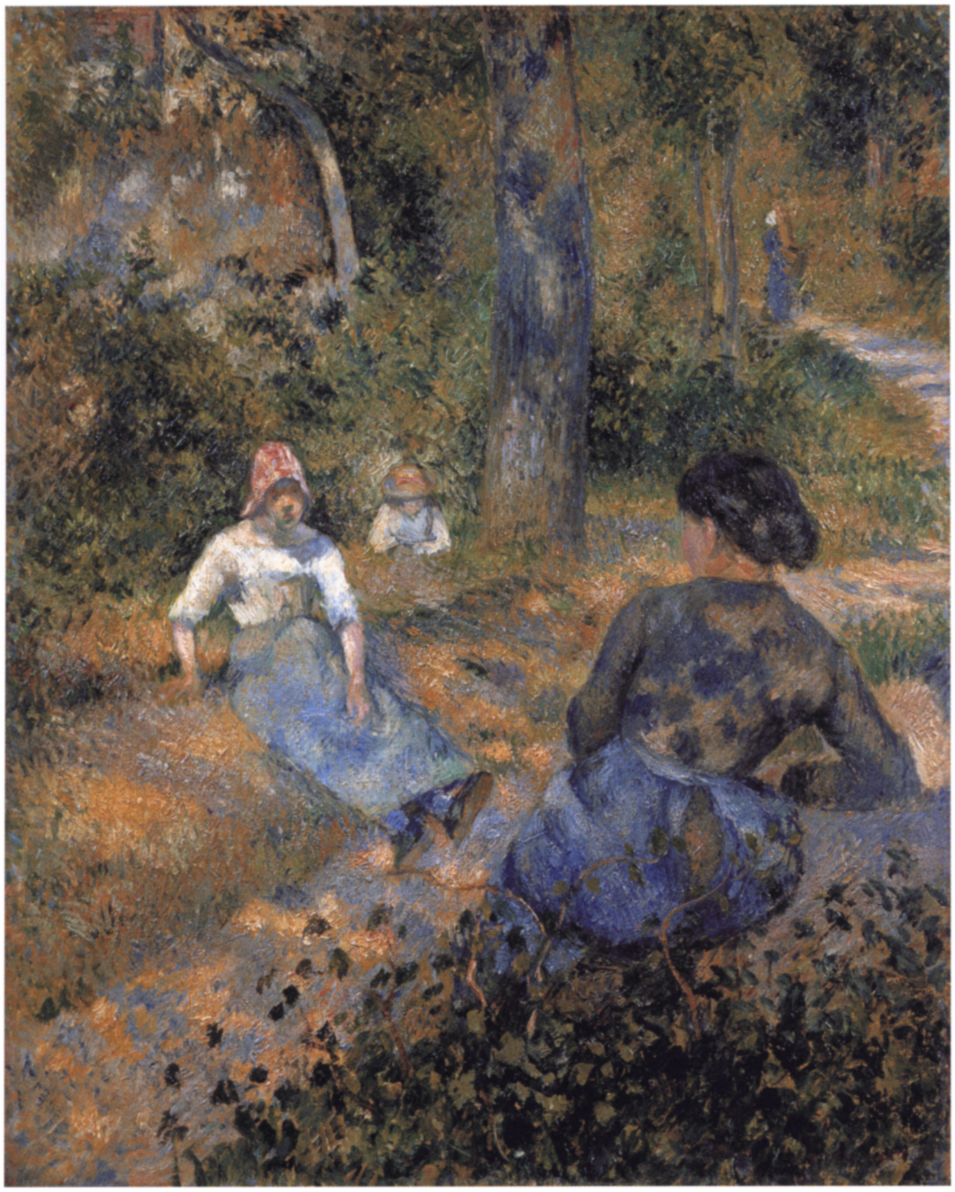


54
Camille Pissarro
Peasant Girl with a Straw Hat, 1881
Oil on canvas, 73.3 × 59.5 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
(Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 1970)

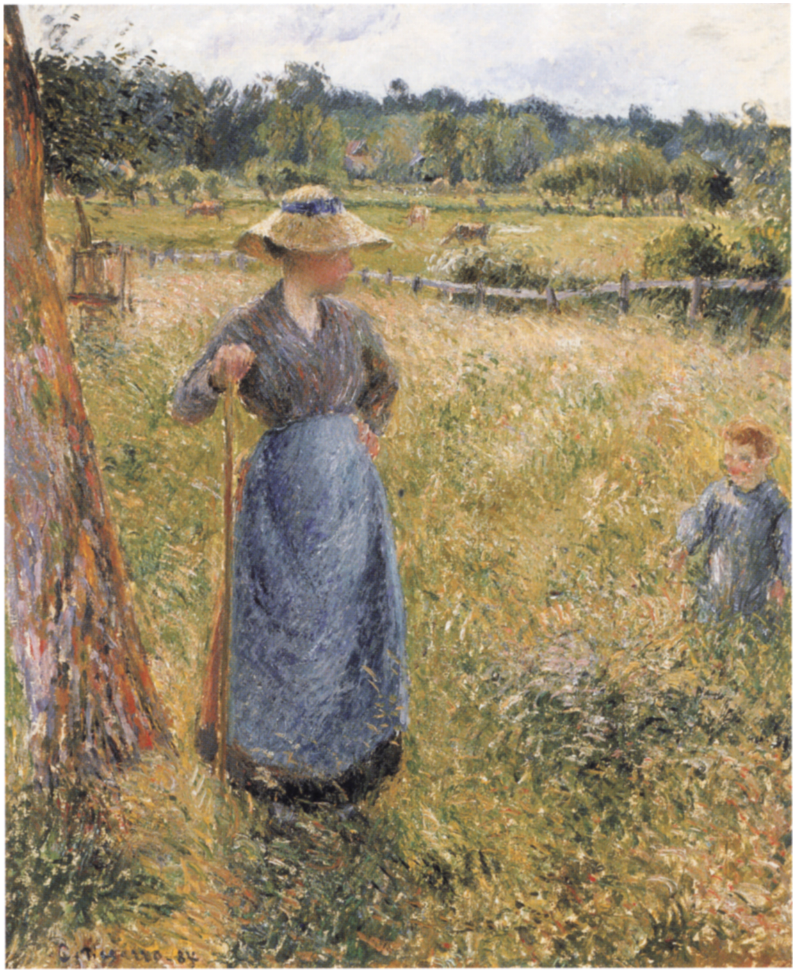
many subjects previously favored by Millet.[14] Among these were images of sowers, goose girls, and cowherds.[15] Two decades later, he would say of his work from that time: "it's really a bit Millet, but at Monfoucault, things have that quality."[16] Pissarro's painting, however, used brighter Impressionist color and a more fragmented touch. Indeed, in 1878 Pissarro criticized Millet and his School of 1830 colleagues for their "morose art."[17] As Duret later perceptively noted, Pissarro's painting technique signaled a greater rupture with earlier artistic traditions than Millet's had.[18]

Pissarro's exhibits at the Impressionist shows of 1879, 1880, and 1881 continued to engage with Millet-like peasant subjects and were often compared to the elder artist. In 1882, Pissarro's large display at the Seventh Impressionist Exhibition showed, for the first time, three-quarter-length portraits of old and young peasantry, ranging from *Washerwoman, Study* to *Peasant Girl with a Straw Hat* (53, 54). The former represented the fifty-six-year-old washerwoman Marie Adeline Larchevêque, who lived at Pontoise: she sits in a doorway, resting in the sunlight.[19] Pissarro's picture undoubtedly referenced Millet's peasant portraits such as *The Knitting Lesson* (30), a view of the artist's wife and daughter. Both artists used non-professional peasant models, but the younger painter again employed a brighter palette and a thicker paint layer consisting of fragmentary impasto touches. In 1882 Pissarro also exhibited several rural landscapes, including *Peasants Resting* (55), a type of view of resting peasantry often favored by Millet. His treatment of light in this *plein air* work—originally entitled *Figure Study in the Open Air, Sunlight Effect*—

notably in the violet shadows offsetting the bright sunlight, separated his composition from that of the elder artist. Despite these differences in color, facture, and light, Pissarro's peasant paintings were repeatedly compared to those of the well-known figure of Millet.[20] The critic Alexandre Hepp, for example, described Pissarro's sitters as "true women of Millet."[21] The earliest evidence that we have of Pissarro himself mentioning the elder artist comes from a letter of March 12, 1882, in which he refutes the connection: "they throw Millet at me, but Millet was biblical! For a Jew, I seem to have little of that in me; it's curious."[22] Pissarro's view of Millet may have been informed by Sensier's biography, which was published the previous year. Certainly, his developing anarchist philosophy showed a marked anticlerical bent. Pissarro's belief in Millet's religiosity was confirmed five years later when *Le Figaro* published



55
Camille Pissarro
Peasants Resting, 1881
Oil on canvas, 81.3 × 65.4 cm
Toledo Museum of Art (purchased
with funds from the Libbey Endowment,
gift of Edward Drummond Libbey)

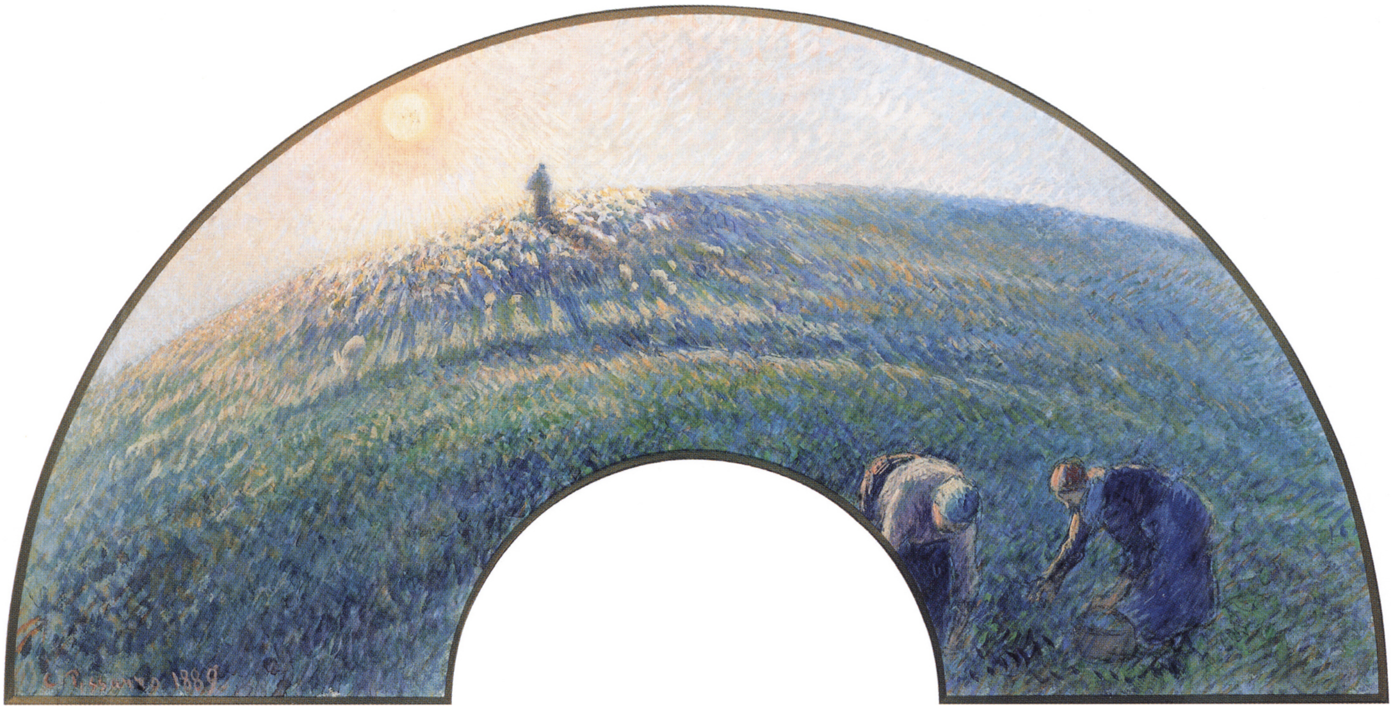


56
Camille Pissarro
Haymaker, 1884
Oil on canvas, 73.5 × 60 cm
Collection Pérez Simón, Mexico

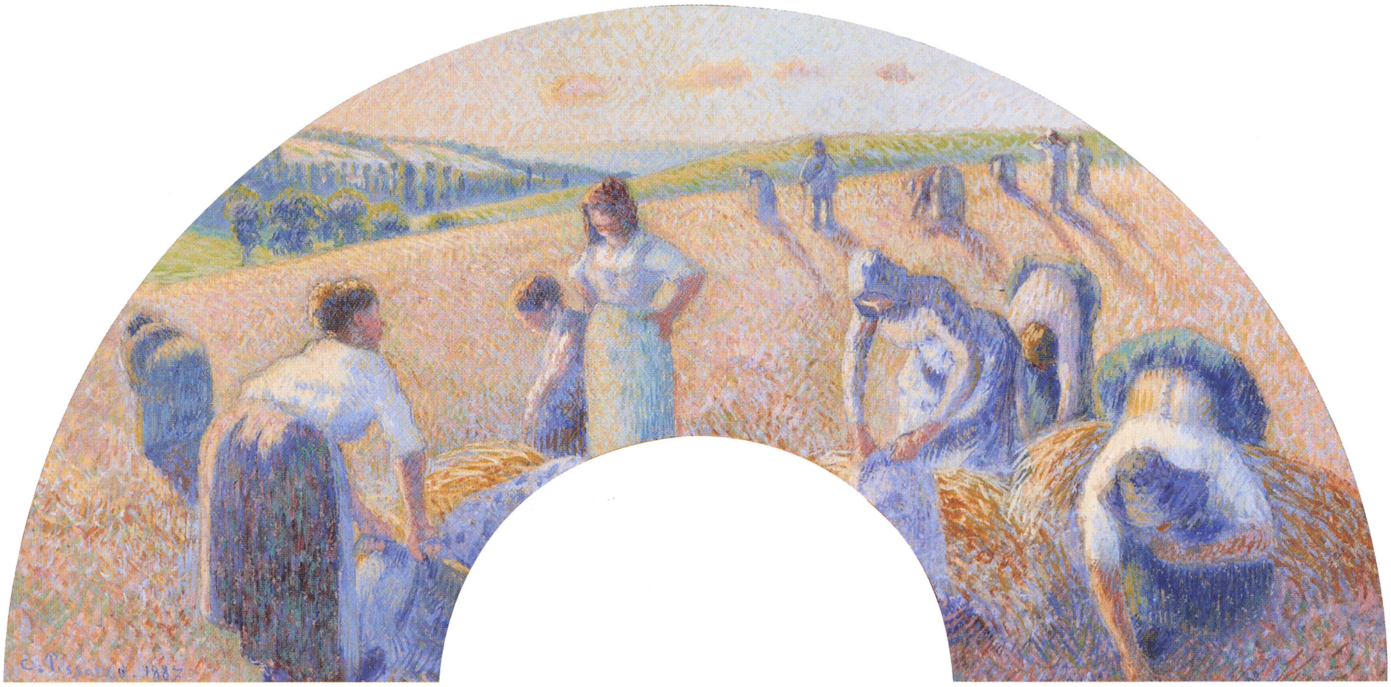
a group of Millet's letters that demonstrated his opposition to the Paris Commune and included the denial that *Man with a Hoe* (26) was a "socialist" painting.[23] Pissarro again presented "the great Millet" as "too biblical," asserting that he was "defending the march of modern ideas" in his work without even knowing it.[24]

On May 15, 1887, Pissarro visited Millet's extensive retrospective at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he found a "compact crowd."[25] The next day, he wrote to his son Lucien of his dislike for Millet's picture *The Angelus,* describing it as "idiotic sentimentality."[26] Pissarro's view of Millet's painting, and particularly this work, was not unusual among the Impressionists. Indeed Renoir later wrote: "I hated Millet. His sentimental peasants made me think of actors dressed up as peasants."[27] The writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, meanwhile, an early champion of Impressionism, attacked Millet's peasants for their artificiality and "staged grandeur."[28] At the 1887 show Pissarro noted that "certain drawings of Millet are a hundred times better than his painting, which has really dated."[29] Pissarro's view of the primacy of Millet's drawings—by which he probably meant the drawings and pastels—was an increasingly widely held one among the avant-garde community. Pissarro's fan design *Flock of Sheep, Sunset* (57) suggests a fascination with the pastels of dramatically sunlit and expansive plains by Millet that received particular critical praise at the 1887 exhibition.[30] Among these was *The Plain* (50).

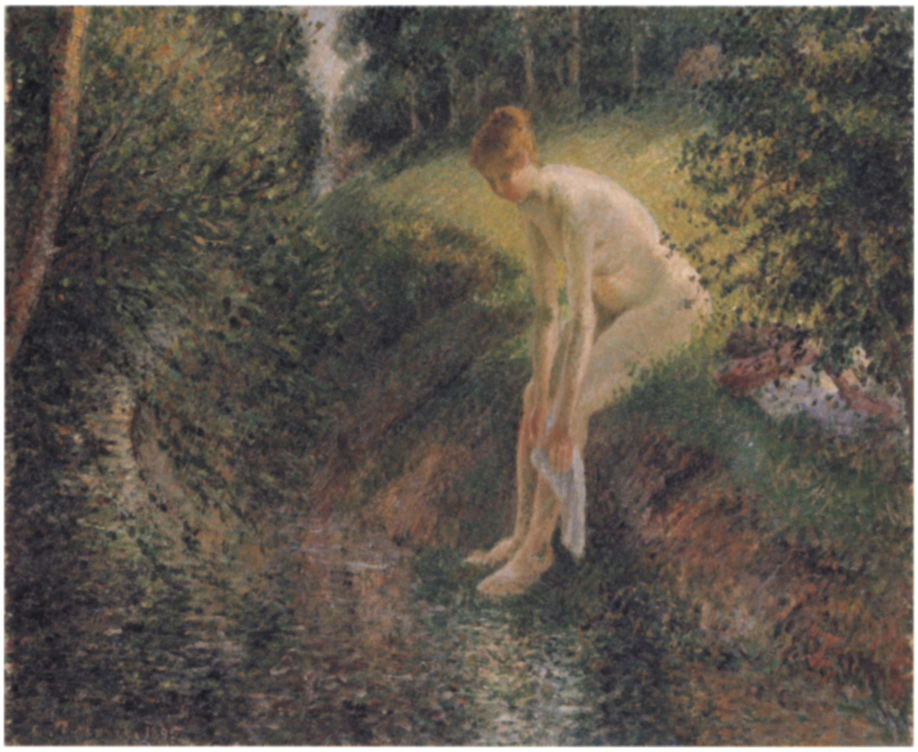
In the mid-1880s, Pissarro continued to treat Millet-like subjects. His *Haymaker* (56) represented a reinterpretation of a print composition by Millet that was first published in the *Labors of the Fields* series in 1853. *Harvest at Eragny* (58),



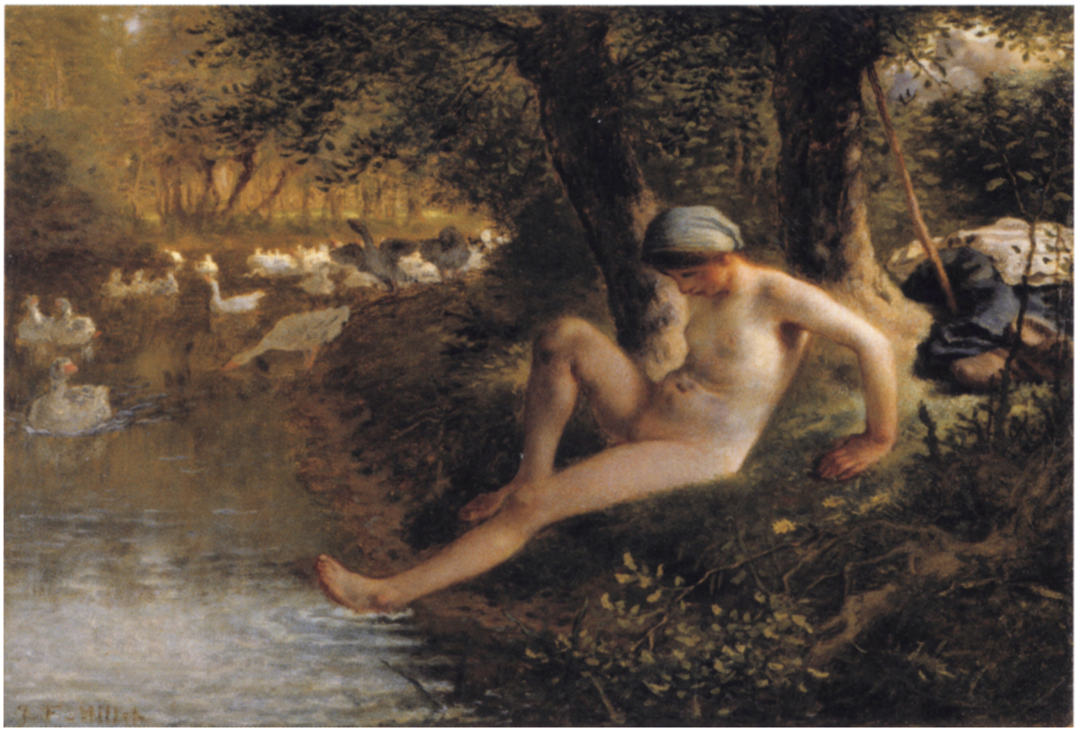
57
Camille Pissarro
Flock of Sheep, Sunset, 1889
Gouache on silk, 20 × 62 cm
Collection Pérez Simón, Mexico



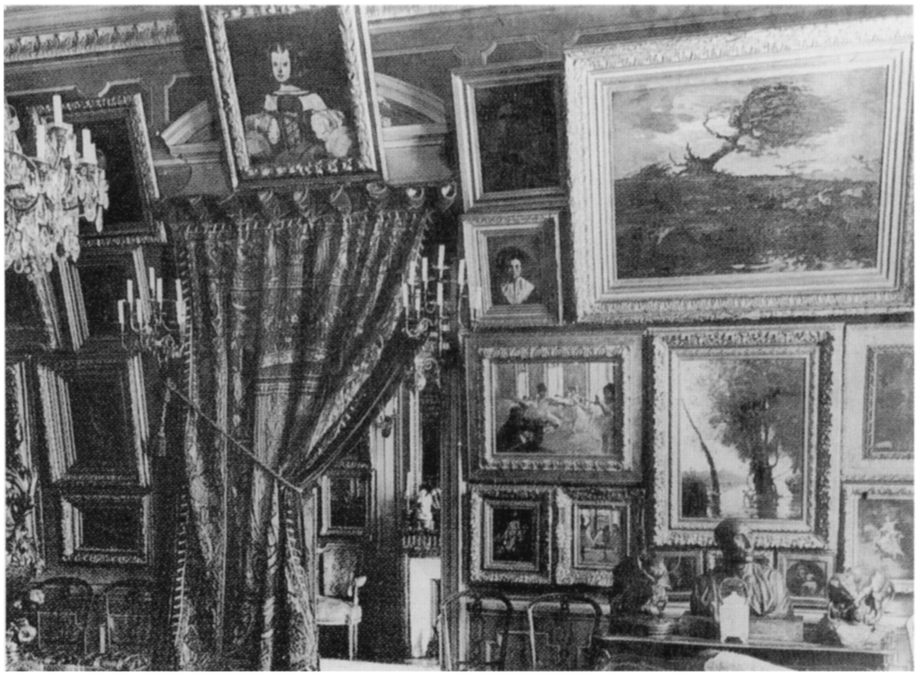
58
Camille Pissarro
Harvest at Eragny, 1887
Gouache on paper, 19.5 × 61 cm
Private collection



59
Camille Pissarro
Bather in the Woods, 1895
Oil on canvas, 60.3 × 73 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



60
Jean-François Millet
The Goose Girl, c. 1863
Oil on canvas, 38 × 46.5 cm
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore



61
Collection of Henri Rouart in his home at rue de Lisbonne, Paris
Private collection

a fan design in Neo-Impressionist style, responded to Millet's *The Gleaners* picture (22), which Pissaro would have seen at the 1887 retrospective. Pissarro, however, again emphasized his difference from the elder painter, noting that his works were "too full of sensation."[31] Pissarro's idyllic view, informed by his anarchist philosophy of cooperative rural communities, contrasted with Millet's image of rural hardship. In the mid-1890s Pissarro would produce a series of images of goose girls sitting by a stream, some naked (59) and some clothed, that responded to a rare example of Millet's treatment of this subject in the early 1860s (60).

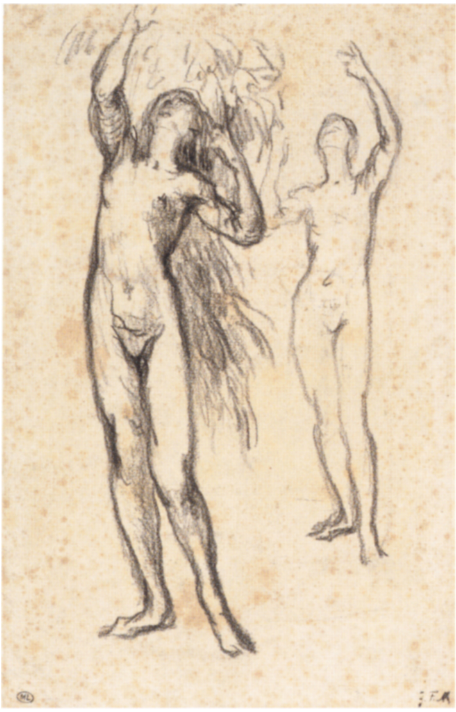
Edgar Degas and Urban "Realism"

The British artist Walter Sickert, an important member of Degas's circle, noted that "among the moderns, Degas's wholehearted admiration seemed to go to Millet, Ingres, and the early Corot."[32] For Sickert, Degas was the avant-garde heir to Millet in his accomplished focus on the rendering of contemporary life, but with the difference that "his field of observation is shifted from the life of the village and the labor of the plains, to the sordid toil of the greenroom and the hectic mysteries of stage illumination."[33] For Sickert, Millet and Degas were also united by their reliance on memory and "cumulative observation." Although Degas himself said little about Millet's work, he showed a similar preoccupation with labor, whether that of laundresses or milliners, and it is quite possible that he saw his imagery as modernizing Millet's work and bringing it from a rural into an urban context. This idea seems also to have been shared by Gustave Caillebotte, another admirer and collector of Millet's work. His *Floor Scrapers* (1875, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) may be seen as an urban version of Millet's *Gleaners*, with the trinity of women replaced by the bodies of three men bent over and immersed in their exhausting labor.[34]

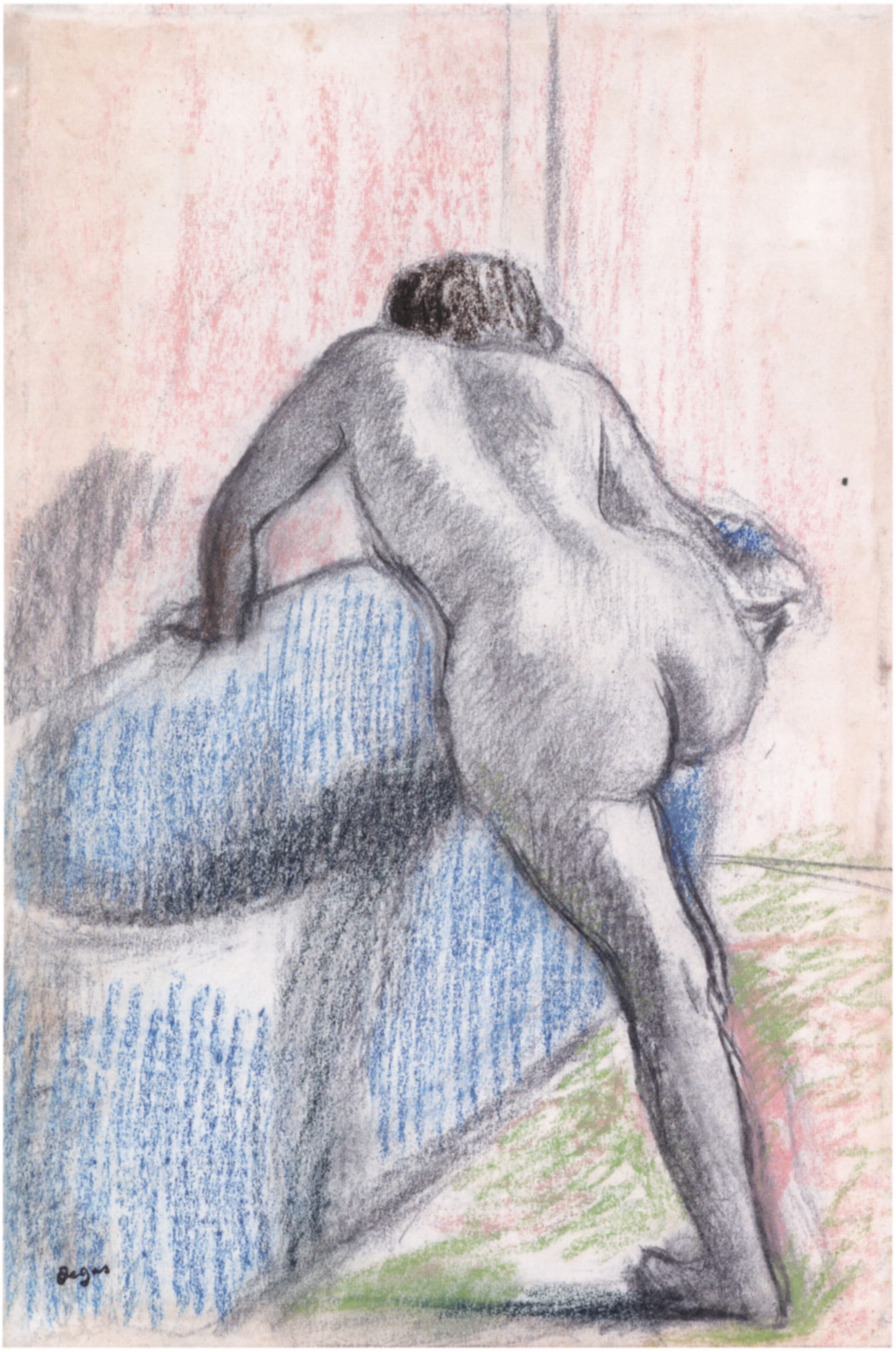
As the leading *pastelliste* among the Impressionists, Degas probably saw the spring 1875 exhibition of Millet's pastels from Gavet's collection. Philippe Burty noted the impact of the Gavet show on the young Impressionists: "the interest excited among the artists who seek their own paths and who have sensitivity is too lively and the plaudits too general for this exhibition to remain in vain."[35] Degas's own pastel technique used methods informed by those of Millet, including dense cross-hatchings, accumulated layers of color, and the fusion of colored pastel and black Conté crayon. In the years to come, Degas would have private access to seminal examples of Millet's work. His close friend the artist and industrialist Henri Rouart, whose home he visited every week for dinner and who showed at six of the eight Impressionist Exhibitions, developed the most significant private collection of Millet's work in France. This was made up of major paintings like *The Gust of Wind* (1871–73, National Museum of Wales), nude imagery like *Shooting Stars* (6), pastels such as *Bouquet of Marguerites* (c. 1871, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), and many drawings. A photograph of a wall of Rouart's collection shows *The Gust of Wind* featured prominently, with works by other important artists hanging below (61). Degas's portrait of Rouart's daughter, Hélène (c. 1886, National Gallery, London), incorporates in the background a framed black crayon drawing by Millet of a female harvester resting against a grainstack.[36] Other friends of Degas's, including Ernest May and Charles Tillot, were also major collectors of Millet's works. Jacques-Emile Blanche later noted Degas's admiration for Millet's drawings, although he also said that the younger artist criticized them as too monochromatic and not "marked as a painter would."[37]

Degas acquired a small group of works by Millet in the 1890s, notable among them a drawing of two female nude studies in which the woman adopts extended, contorted poses (62).[38] His emotional connection with Millet may also have been strengthened by his acquisition of a painting by El Greco, *Saint Ildefonso* (c. 1603/14, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC), that had hung above Millet's bed in the final years of his life.[39] Degas's experiments with the treatment of the female body, in particular his many views of bathers, respond to the varied repertoire of Millet's nudes that appeared regularly on the market and in print form.[40] Degas's view of a woman stepping into an iron bath (63) translates the pose of the right-hand figure in Millet's rural painting *Two Bathers* (64), on view at the Musée du Luxembourg since 1875, into a new, urban setting. In *Breakfast after the Bath* (65), the crouching form and the artist's use of broken line also relate to Millet's earlier imagery of the female body. There were similarities between the two artists also in their approach to landscape. Degas's landscapes of Burgundy of the early 1890s (67) suggest a knowledge of Millet's minimalistic compositions, with their simplified motifs, high horizons, and winding paths (66). Degas could have seen several such examples at the Millet retrospective in 1887. The approach of both artists was informed by the compositional strategies of Japanese printmakers,[41] and in 1881 the critic Paul Eudel compared Degas's radical cropping of forms in his two pastels both entitled *Criminal Physiognomy* (both private collection), then on view at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition, to Millet's cropping of a cow's body in the late marine *Cliffs at Gruchy* (45).[42]

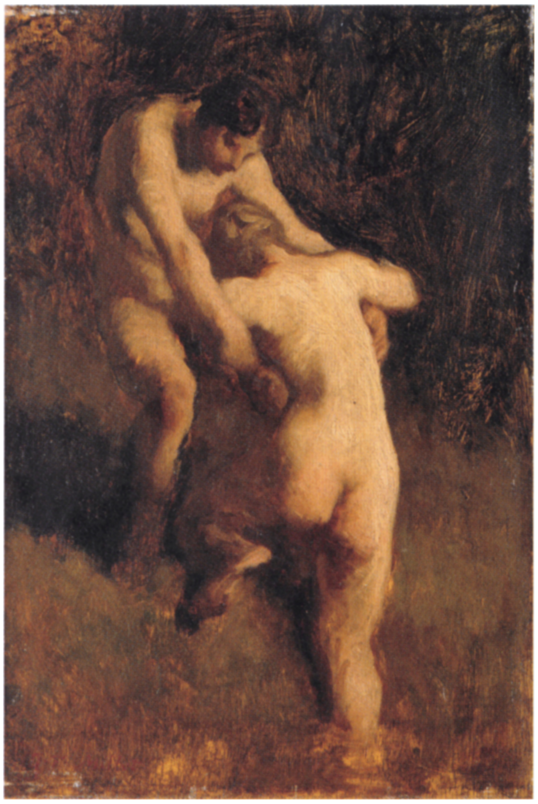
In seeking to extend the Impressionist circle, Degas planned to invite the peasant painter Léon Lhermitte to exhibit at the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition in 1879.[43] Lhermitte would often choose similar subjects to Millet, as in his pastel *Rest, Effect of the Hot Sun* (68) and his painting *The Gleaners* (69). Ultimately, Lhermitte did not take part, ensuring that he remained outside the avant-garde Impressionist circle. The following year Degas invited Jean-François Raffaëlli to exhibit, and this time the offer was accepted, with the latter submitting extensive bodies of imagery of the poor and marginalized of Paris in 1880 and 1881. The critic Albert Wolff wrote of him: "Like



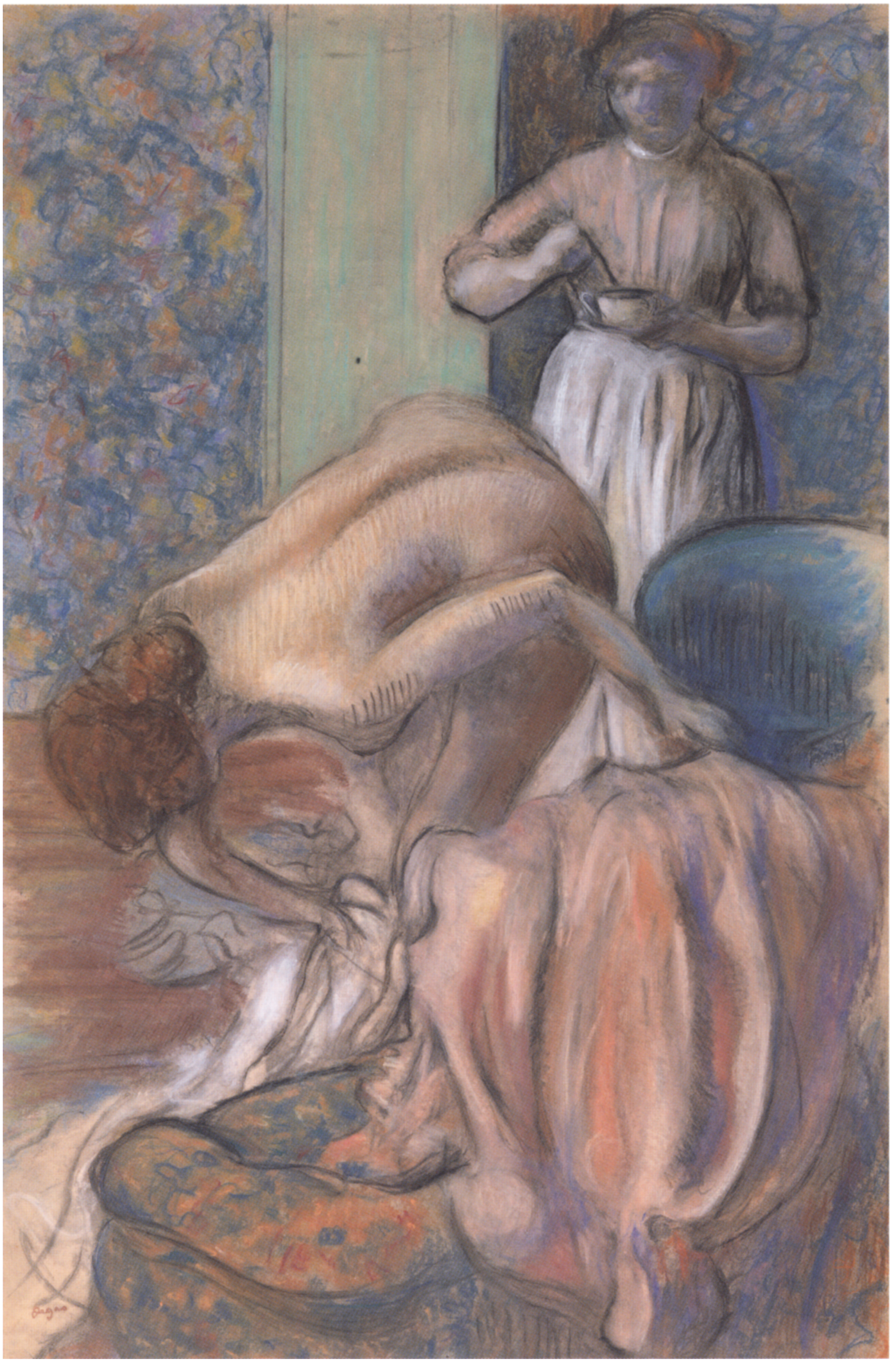
62
Jean-François Millet
Two Studies of a Female Nude, c. 1846–48
Black chalk on beige paper, 24.3 × 15.7 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du Louvre, Paris



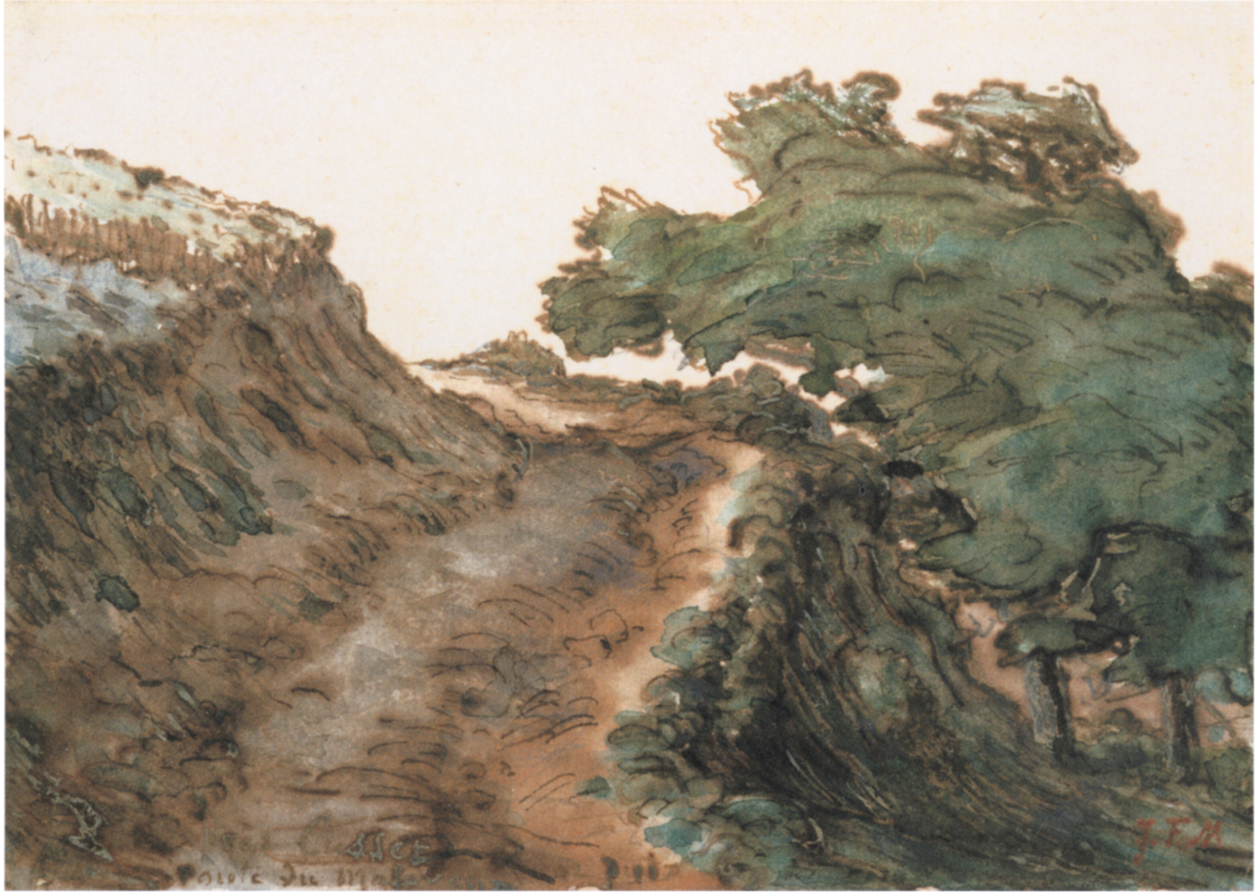
63
Edgar Degas
The Bath, 1892–95
Pastel and charcoal on paper, 48.5 × 32.4 cm
Art Institute of Chicago (gift of Dorothy Braude
Edinburg to the Harry B. and Bessie K. Braude
Memorial Collection)



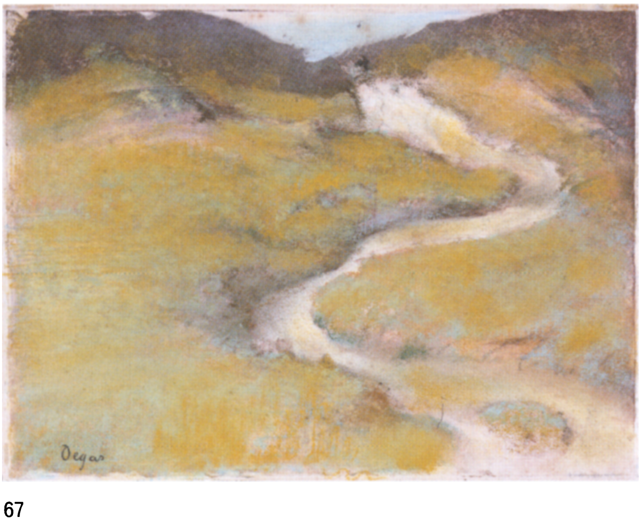
64
Jean-François Millet
Two Bathers, 1848
Oil on wood, 28 × 19 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



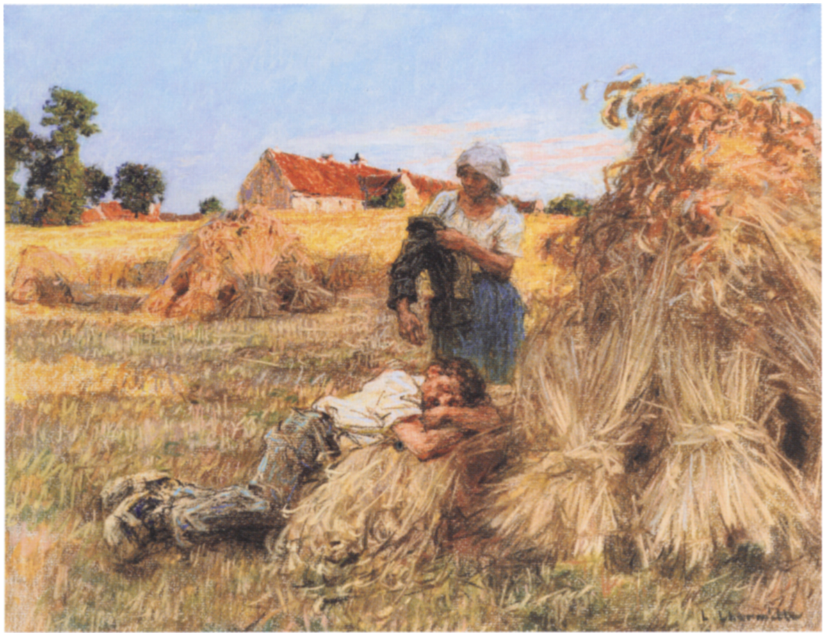
65
Edgar Degas
Breakfast after the Bath, 1894
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 104 × 68.5 cm
Triton Collection Foundation



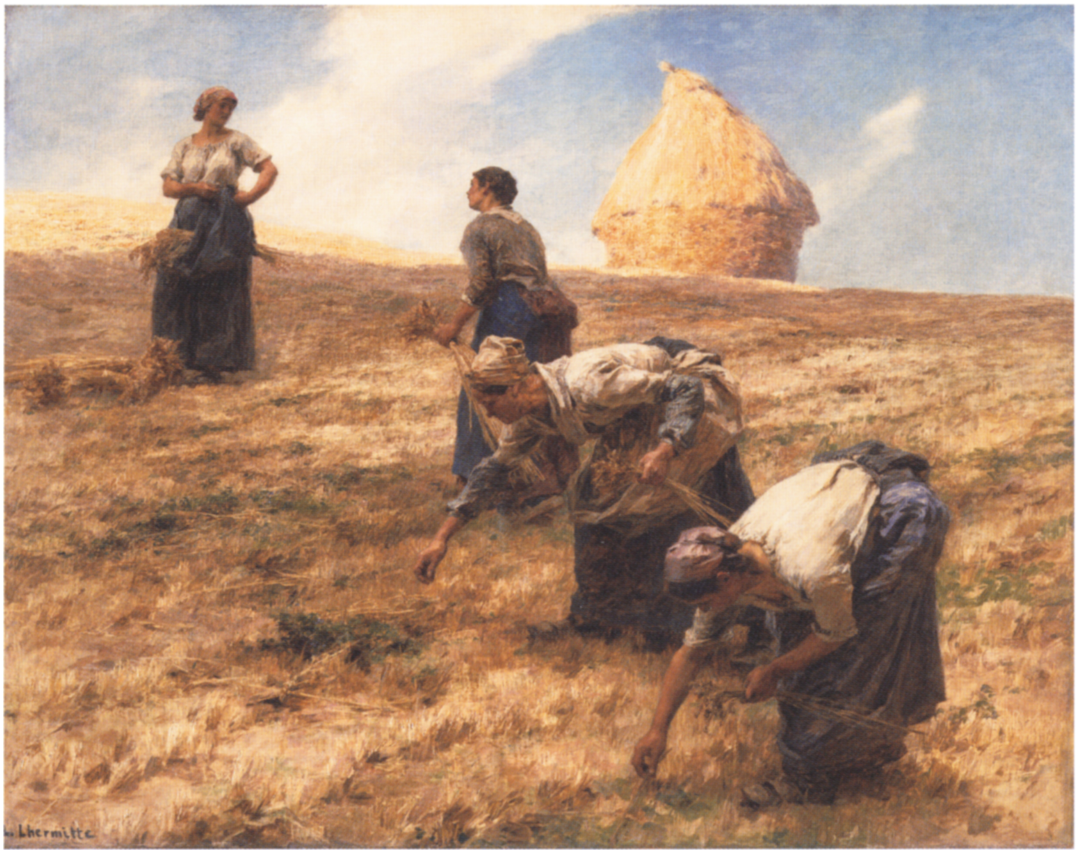
66
Jean-François Millet
Road from Malavaux, near Cusset, 1867
Watercolor, pen and brown ink over
graphite pencil on paper, 11.2 × 16.2 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
(gift of Martin Brimmer)



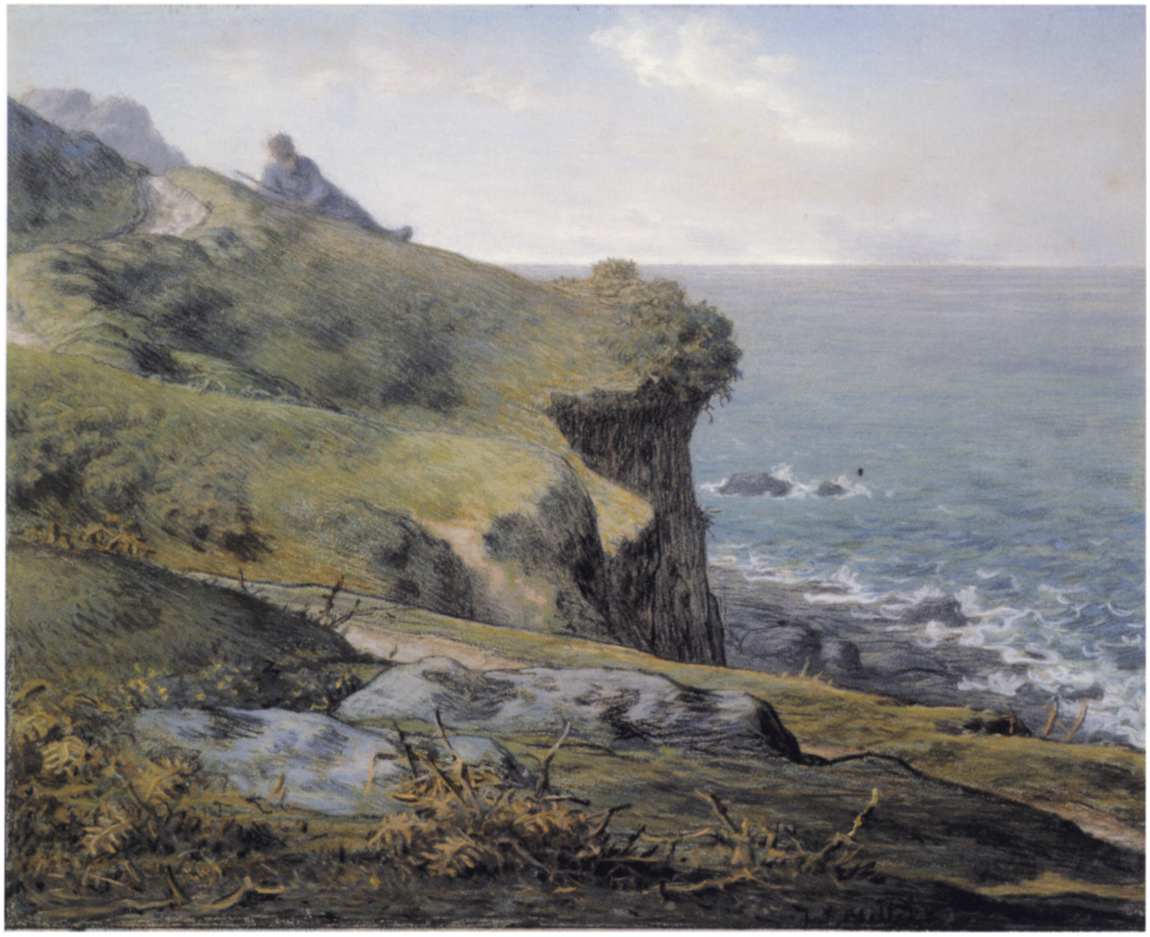
67
Edgar Degas
Pathway in a Field, 1890
Pastel over monotype in oil colors,
30 × 39.5 cm
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven
(Katharine Ordway Fund)



68
Léon-Augustin Lhermitte
Rest, Effect of the Hot Sun, Sleeping Reaper, Mézy, 1898
Pastel on paper, 35 × 44 cm
Private collection, San Francisco



69
Léon-Augustin Lhermitte
The Gleaners, 1887
Oil on canvas, 74.9 × 95.9 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art
(The George W. Elkins Collection, 1924)

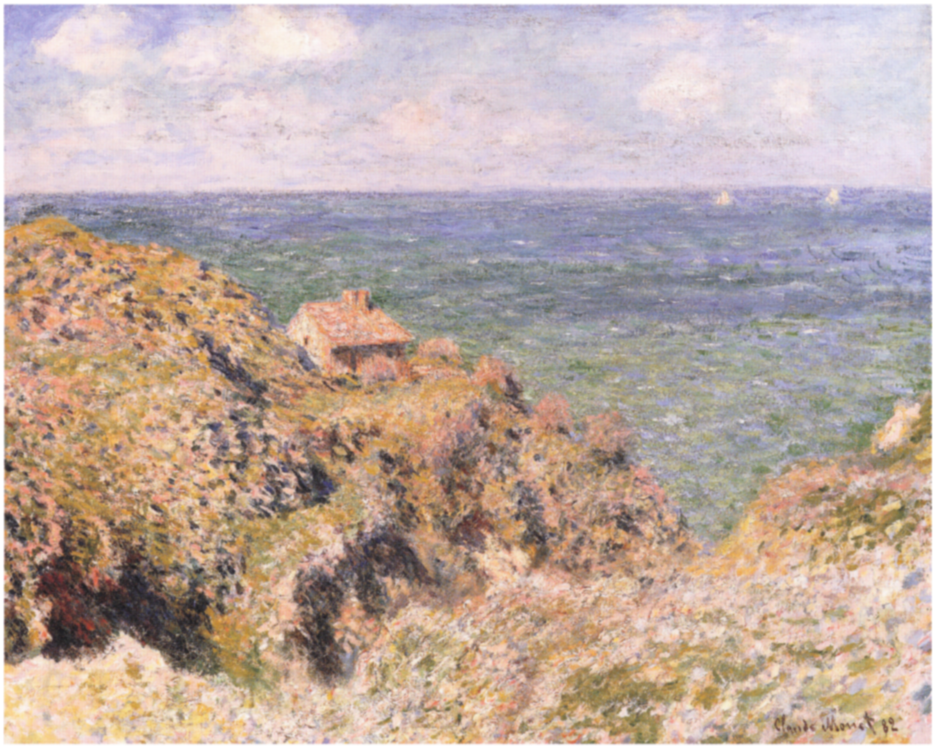


70
Jean-François Millet
The Cliffs of Gréville, 1871
Pastel on paper, 43.5 × 54 cm
Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki

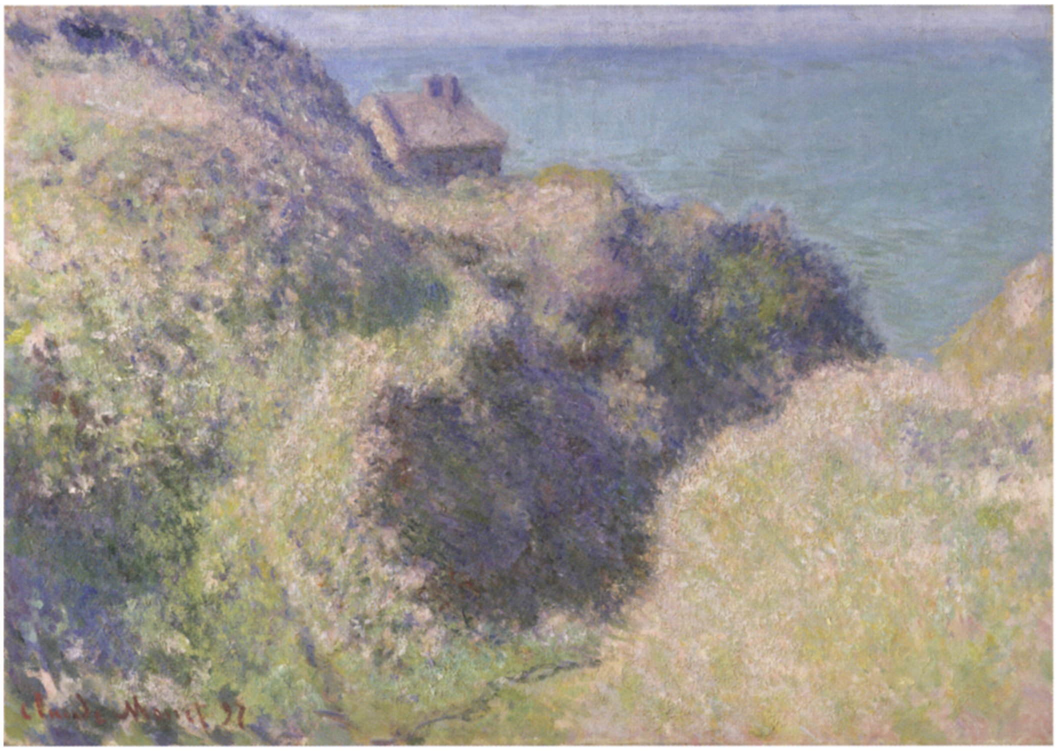
Millet, he is the painter of the humble. What the great master did for the fields, Raffaëlli begins to do for the modest people of Paris."[44]

Claude Monet and Impressionist Landscape

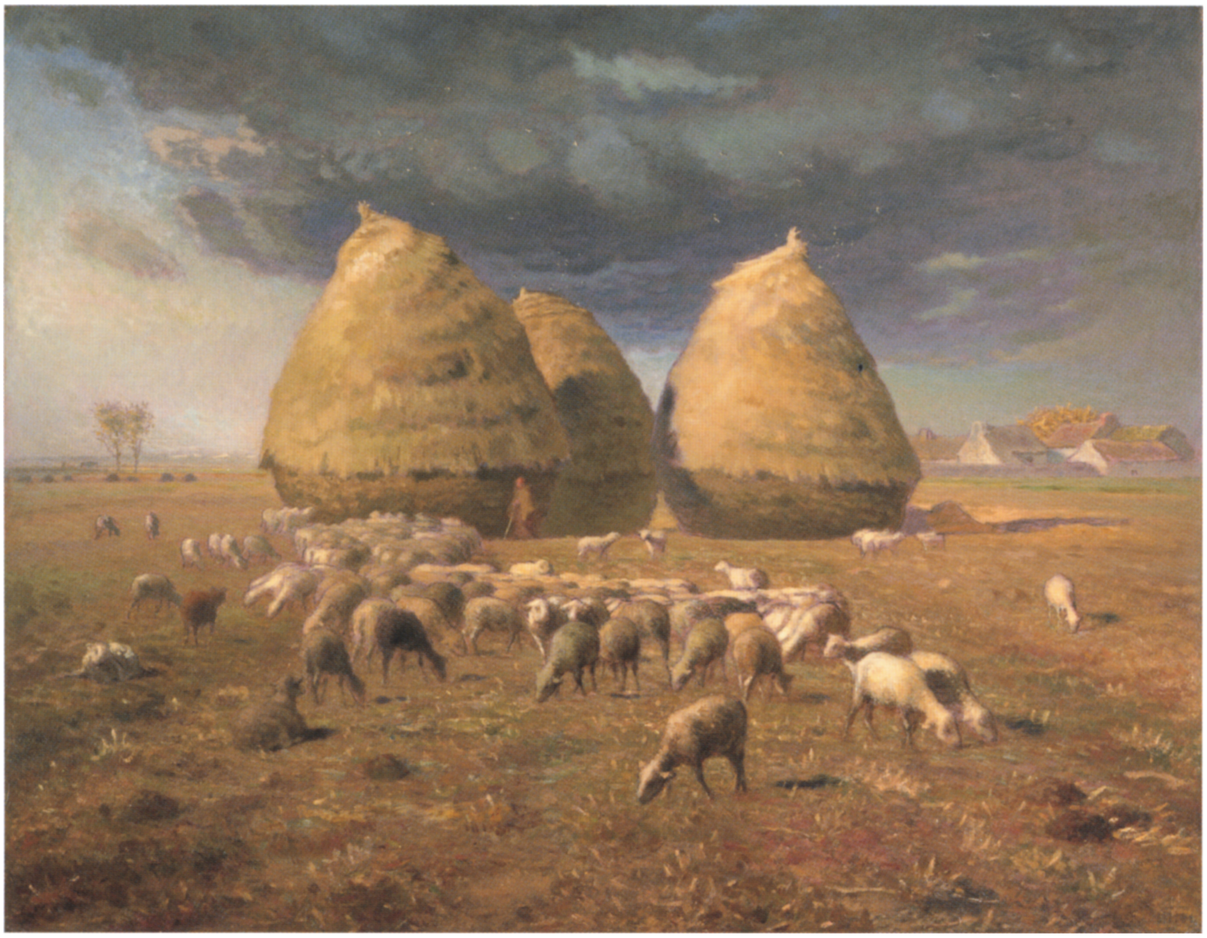
As a young man, Monet once saw Millet at a party and wanted to approach him: "I admired him so much," he would later recall, but was deterred by the elder artist's reputation for aloofness and unsociability.[45] Monet's early admiration for Millet—recognized decades ago by American art historian John Rewald[46]—was probably encouraged by Frédéric Bazille, a close friend with whom he shared a studio in the mid-1860s. At the Exposition Universelle of 1867, Bazille remarked that "there are about twenty fine canvases by Millet, and Corot."[47] Two years later, at the Salon, he picked out Millet's painting *The Knitting Lesson* (30), which, together with Corot's submissions, he described as "the only beautiful pictures" on view.[48] Bazille's own work, particularly his last major painting, *Ruth and Boaz* (90), a subject that had also been treated by Millet, suggests his awareness of the flattened, generalized forms of the elder artist.[49] Bazille died tragically young in the Franco-Prussian War, and thus we can only imagine the way in which his work would have continued to respond to that of Millet. Monet, for his part, engaged with Millet's work over several decades. Both men came from Normandy and were proud of that, and shared a deep love of the sea. The two artists made the painting of Normandy marines an important part of their practice. There were, however, significant differences between Monet's palette and that of Millet. The younger painter used brighter colors of



71
Claude Monet
The Gorge at Varengeville, 1882
Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm
David and Mary Beth Shimmon



72
Claude Monet
Gorge of the Petit-Ailly, Varengeville, 1897
Oil on canvas, 65.7 × 92.7 cm
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,
Cambridge (gift of Ella Milbank Foshay)

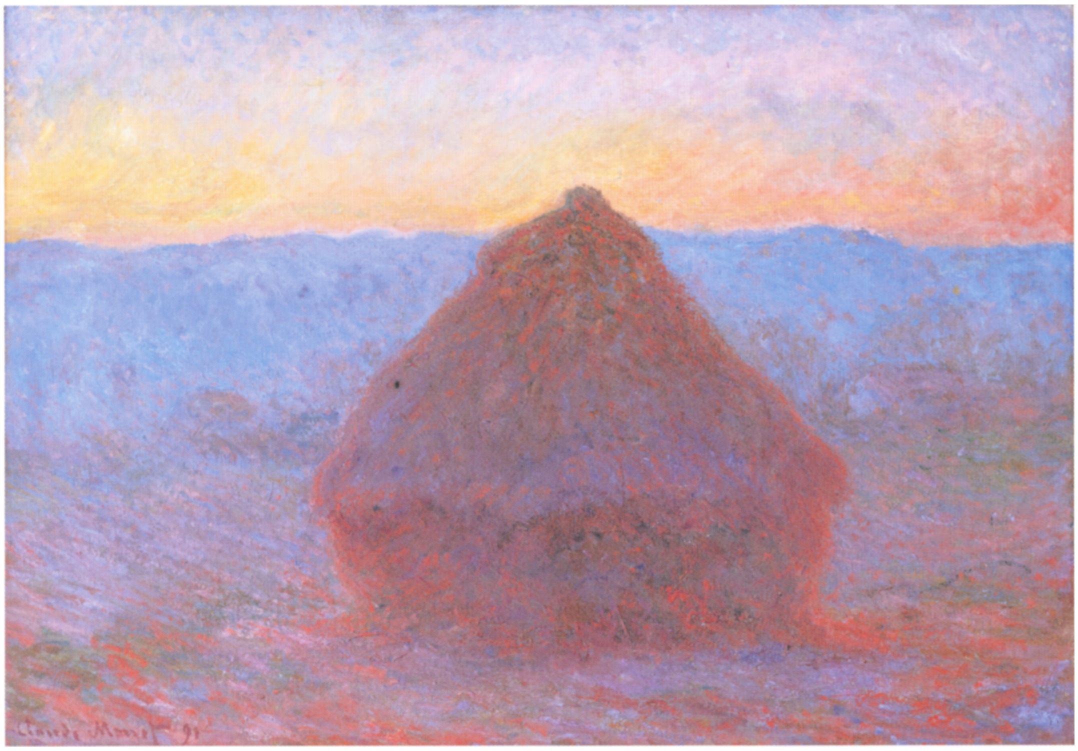


73
Jean-François Millet
Haystacks: Autumn, c. 1874
Oil on canvas, 85.1 × 110.2 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(bequest of Lillian S. Timken, 1959)

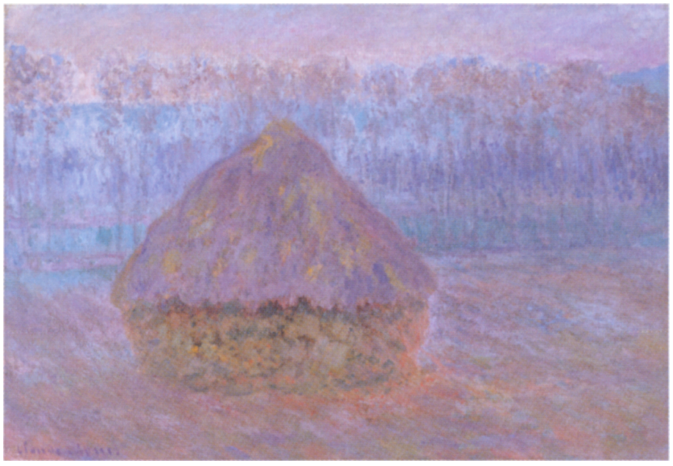
a greater chromatic intensity and eliminated the bituminous earth tones such as mummy that were favored by Millet.[50]

In the early 1880s Monet focused on the cliffs around Varengeville, Normandy, in a series of paintings (71). His plunging perspectives, high horizons, and cropped viewpoints have a similarity to the late marines of Millet. Monet could have seen *Cliffs at Gruchy* (44) as early as 1871 when it was exhibited by Durand-Ruel in London, shortly after he had made his acquaintance with the dealer in that city. In 1875, he probably saw *The Cliffs of Gréville* (70) at the spring exhibition or summer auction sale of Emile Gavet's collection in Paris. Thereafter, he could have seen *Cliffs at Gruchy* (45) at the Frédéric Hartmann sale in May 1881, where it was noted for its unconventional composition and luminous color.[51] Later, in the mid 1890s, Monet returned to the Varengeville motif in another group of paintings (72), in which he placed a greater emphasis on decorative surface pattern.

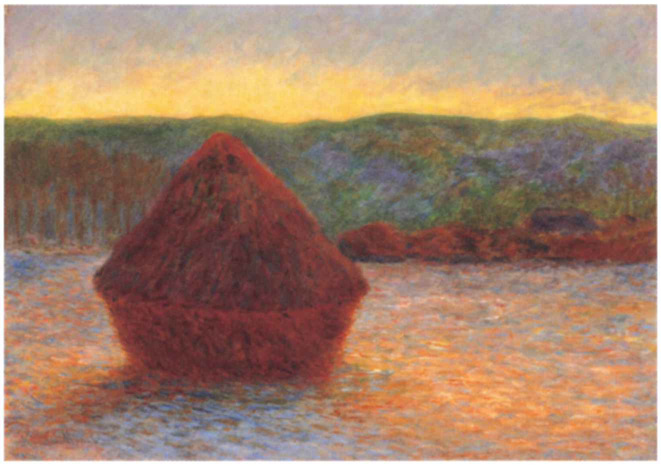
Monet's *Haystacks* series of the late 1880s and early 1890s, first exhibited as a group of fifteen in Durand-Ruel's gallery in 1891, also responded to Millet's well-known and varied treatments of this motif, particularly *Haystacks: Autumn* (73), a view of enormous haystacks beneath an autumnal, showery sky on the Barbizon plain.[52] This late picture appeared in Millet's Paris shows in 1887 and 1889 and revealed the artist's new interest in light and atmospheric effects.[53] It also showed his innovative willingness to allow his black chalk underdrawing to show through his paint layers. Millet's lilac- and rose-colored ground is clearly visible too.[54] Indeed the artist's experiments with



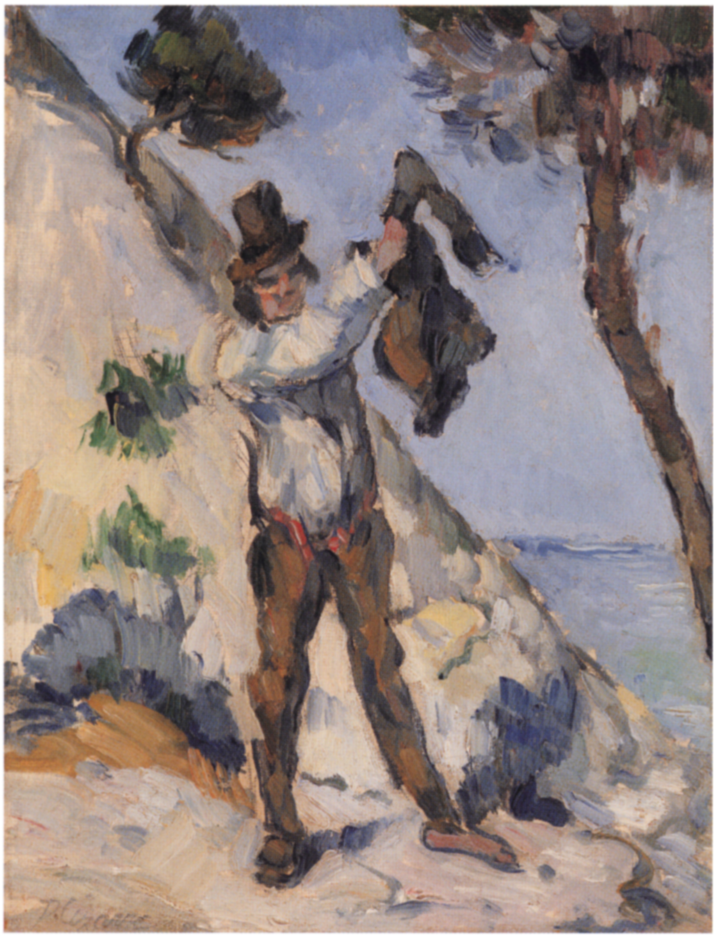
74
Claude Monet
Grainstack, 1890–91
Oil on canvas, 65 × 92 cm
Private collection



75
Claude Monet
Grainstack in Winter,
Misty Weather, 1888–89
Oil on canvas, 65 × 92 cm
Private collection



76
Claude Monet
The Haystack, c. 1891
Oil on canvas, 65 × 92 cm
Private collection

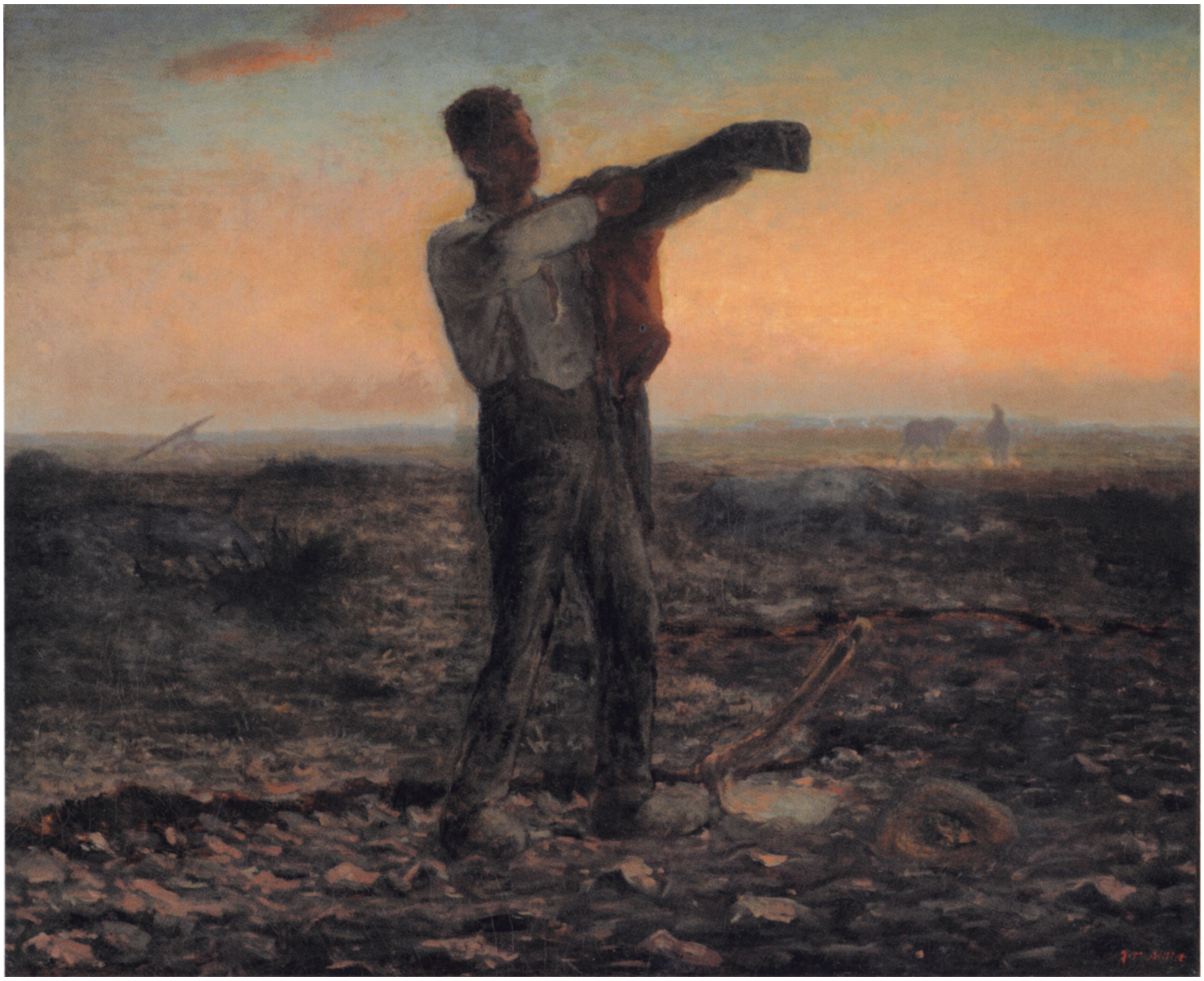


77
Paul Cézanne
Man with a Vest, c. 1873
Oil on canvas, 32.5 × 25 cm
Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia

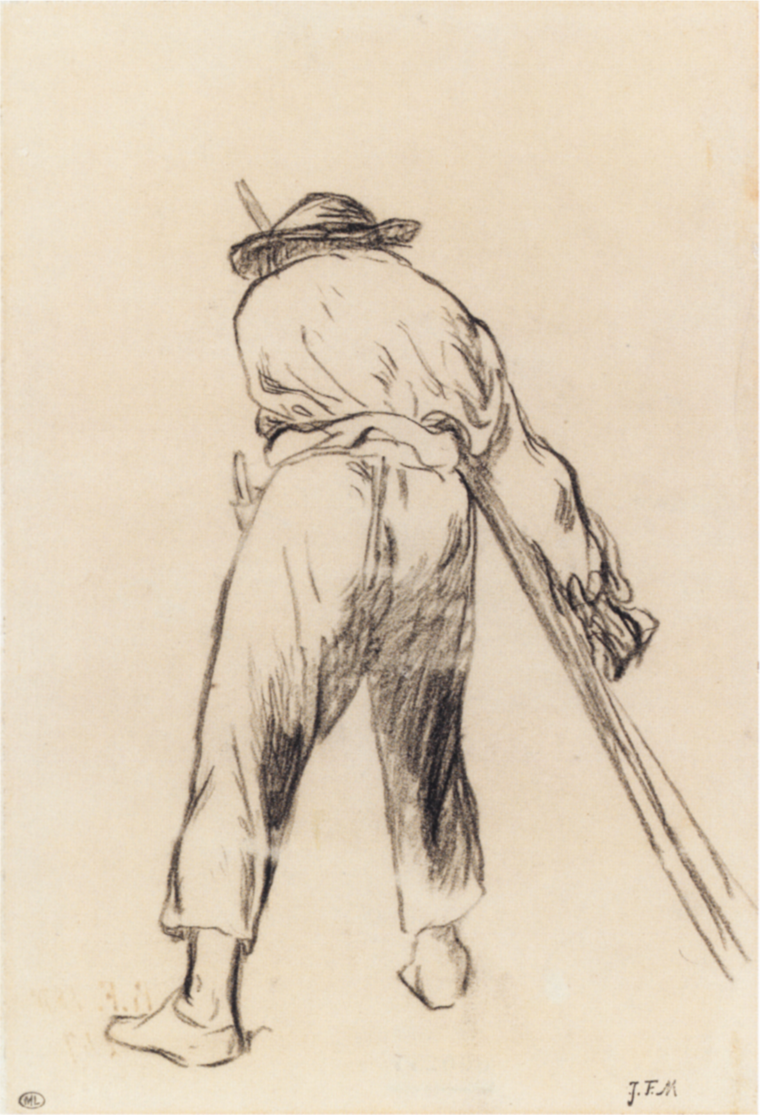
colored grounds in his late work anticipates Impressionist innovation in this area. Monet would develop and intensify Millet's approach to the subject of haystacks in his own series of paintings. The critic Arsène Alexandre wrote that while Millet had understood the "solemnity" and "gravity" of the grainstack as the fruit of harvest labor, in Monet's paintings "man is absent," the artist focusing exclusively on capturing "games of light determined by the magic wand of the hours."[55] Monet's many views thus showed the haystacks at different times of day, from sunrise to sunset (74, 76), and in different weather effects, including snow and mist (75). Monet's central placement of the haystack (74) suggests an understanding of the geometry of Millet's work.

Paul Cézanne

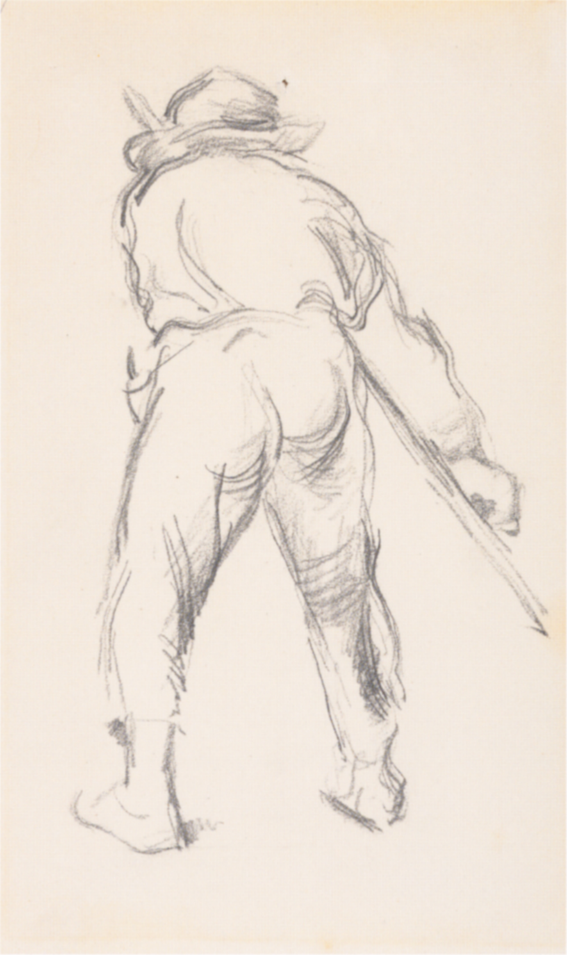
The trajectory of Paul Cézanne's career, from his early works of sex and violence to the later imagery displaying a stable geometry, has an interesting analogy with that of Millet. In the mid-1870s, Cézanne certainly looked to the elder painter, whose work still carried an association of radicalism, and this appreciation was surely encouraged by Pissarro, Cézanne's closest artist friend at this time. Cézanne then produced several pastoral scenes, such as *The Harvest* (c. 1877, private collection), that relate to Millet's subjects. His *Man with a Vest* (77) appropriates the pose of the rural worker in Millet's *End of the Workday* (78) and translates it to a more enclosed setting by the sea.[56] His protagonist pulls his left arm through the sleeve of his jacket, which falls limply in a sexually suggestive way. One of Cézanne's sketchbooks



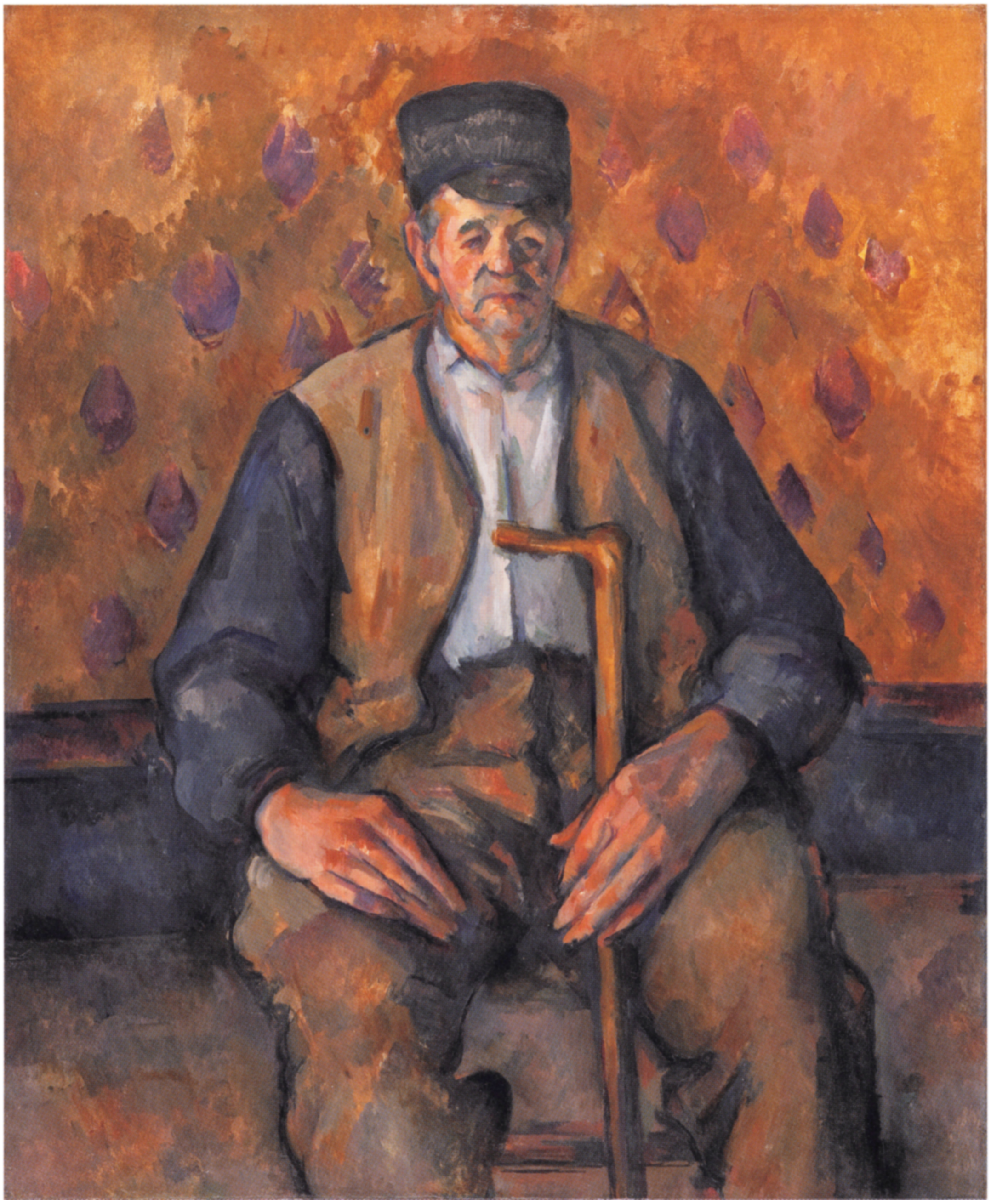
78
Jean-François Millet
The End of the Workday, 1865
Oil on canvas, 59.6 × 73 cm
Private collection



79
Jean-François Millet
The Reaper, c. 1852
Charcoal on paper, 25 × 17 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du
Louvre, Paris



80
Paul Cézanne
The Reaper (after Millet), page xvii (recto)
from sketchbook II, after 1879
Graphite on paper, 21.6 × 12.7 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art (gift of Mr.
and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg, 1987)



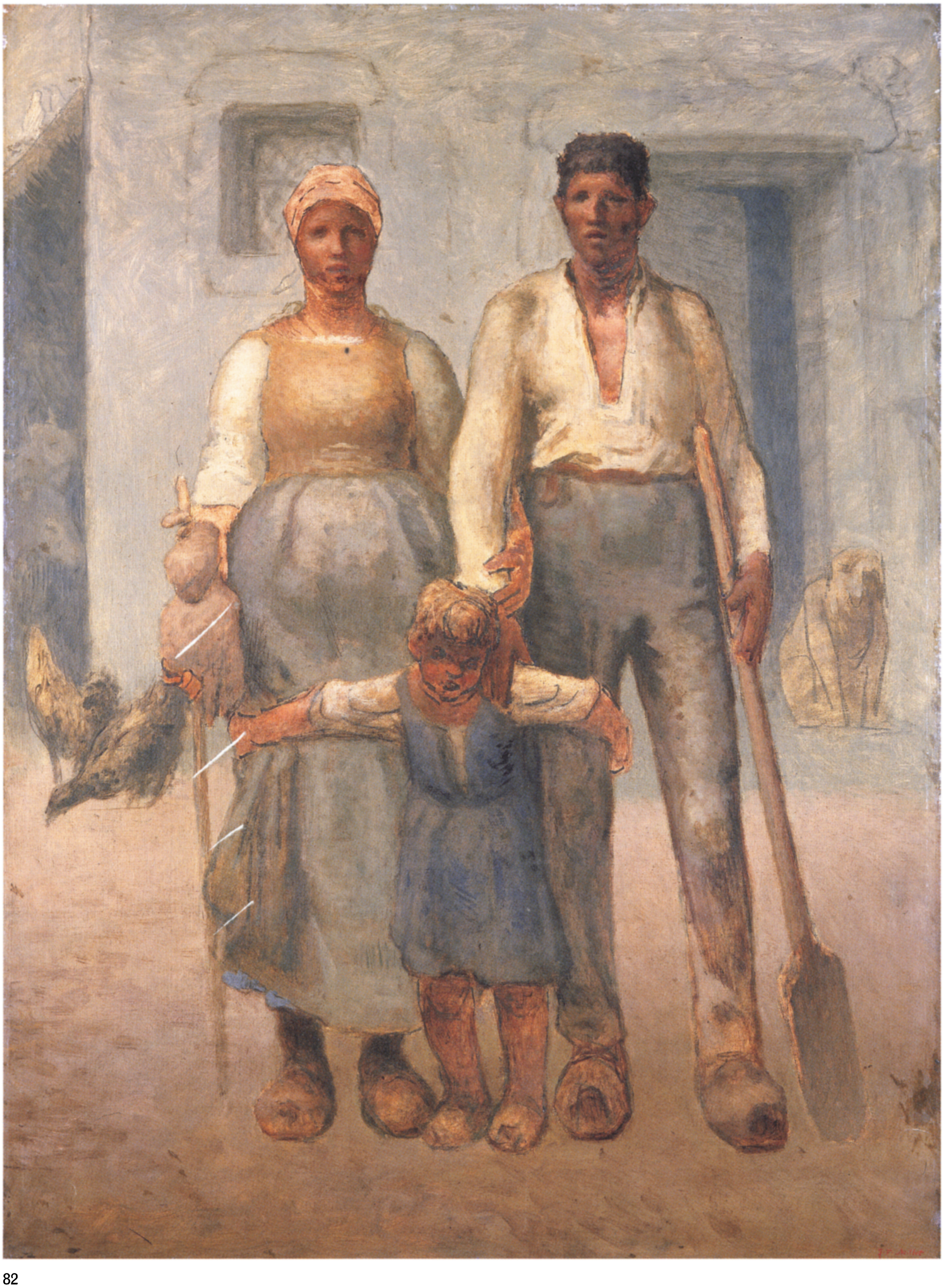
81
Paul Cézanne
Seated Peasant, 1900–04
Oil on canvas, 73.3 × 60.3 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

also contains a drawing (80) after Millet's *The Reaper* (79), which had been acquired by the state at the artist's 1875 sale and was probably periodically on view at the Musée du Luxembourg.[57] Cézanne's deft, broken line represents an abstraction of Millet's own drawing technique. We also know that Cézanne owned a photograph of Millet's *Church at Gréville* (48).[58]

In a later conversation with his friend the writer Joachim Gasquet, Cézanne situated himself within a tradition of innovative artists, including Millet, who had created a "revolution" by "rediscovering nature."[59] The artist Jacques-Emile Blanche, for his part, highlighted the classicism of the work of both painters. He wrote in 1919 that the word "classical" was repeatedly used in contemporary discourse around the younger artist but that "no painter embodies it better than Millet."[60] The frontality and geometry of Cézanne's later portraits such as *Seated Peasant* (81) suggest an awareness of works like Millet's *The Peasant Family* (82), which Cézanne could have seen at the latter's studio sale. Both Cézanne and Millet shared a deep admiration of Nicolas Poussin, identified by Blanche as an antecedent of Millet and of the avant-garde more widely.[61]

Millet's Impressionist Legacy

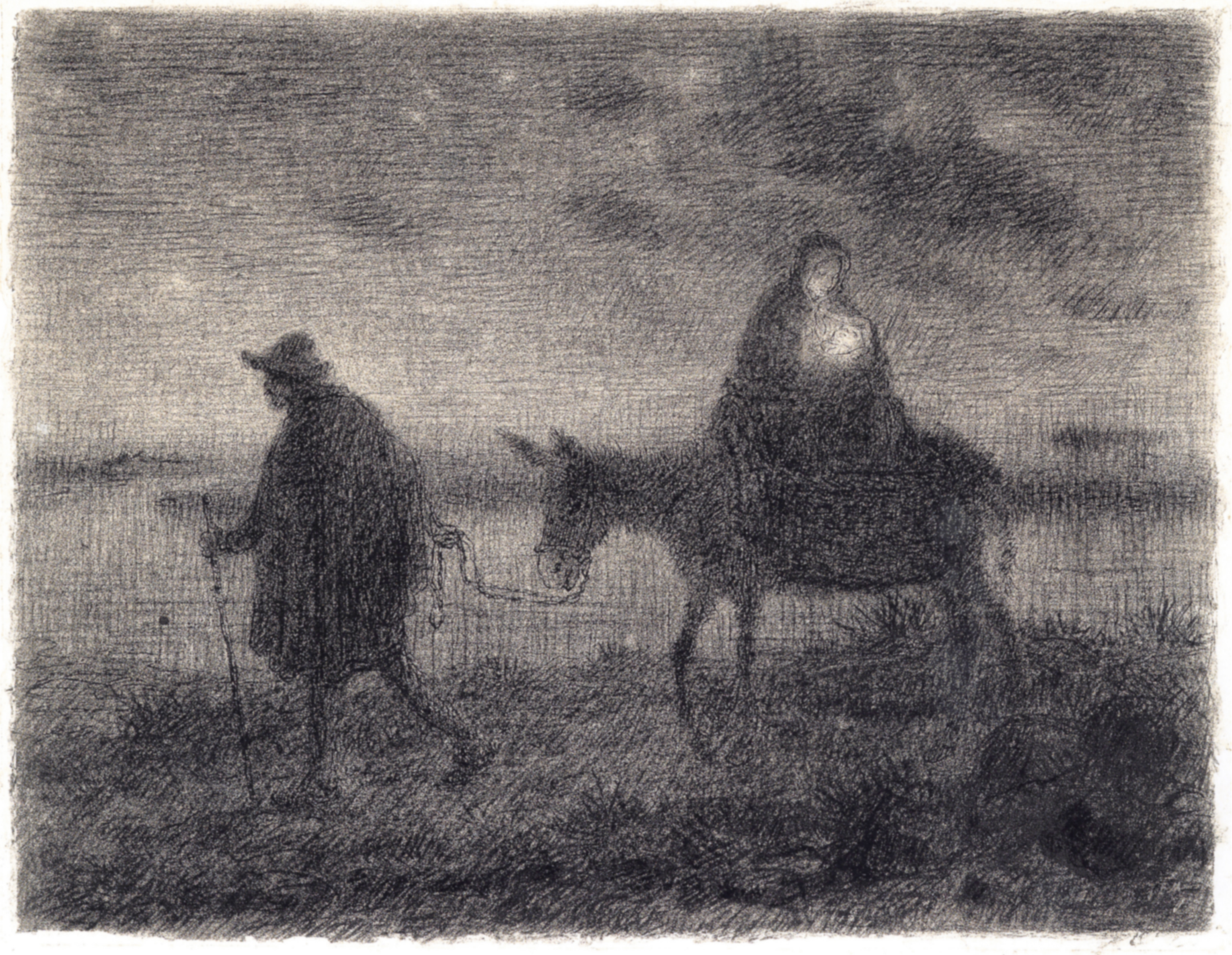
Other artist peers of Millet, notably Gustave Courbet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, have traditionally been seen as exercising a greater influence on the Impressionists, in part because they had more direct contact with the younger artists.[62] Corot, for example, taught Berthe Morisot and Pissarro, while Courbet became a friend of Monet's and appeared in his enormous *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1862–63, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Charles-François Daubigny's impact on the Impressionists, particularly in his support as Salon juror, has also been recognized.[63] Although Millet did not work directly with the Impressionists, his influence on them, as we have seen, was considerable. These younger artists engaged with Millet's work in different ways: Pissarro and Cézanne focused on his scenes of peasantry, Monet on his marines, Degas on his nudes. In their technical practices the Impressionists took the most from his innovative use of pastel and crayon, where he applied his most vibrant color and vigorous handling. They may not always have agreed with his approaches, but the Impressionists were nonetheless indebted to the older artist as an example of subversive formal and political experiment and opposition to the academy. They recognized his looming presence, with Pissarro even describing him as "Great Millet."[64] Aware of his example, the Impressionists inherited Millet's avant-garde mantle as the radical modern artists of the next generation.



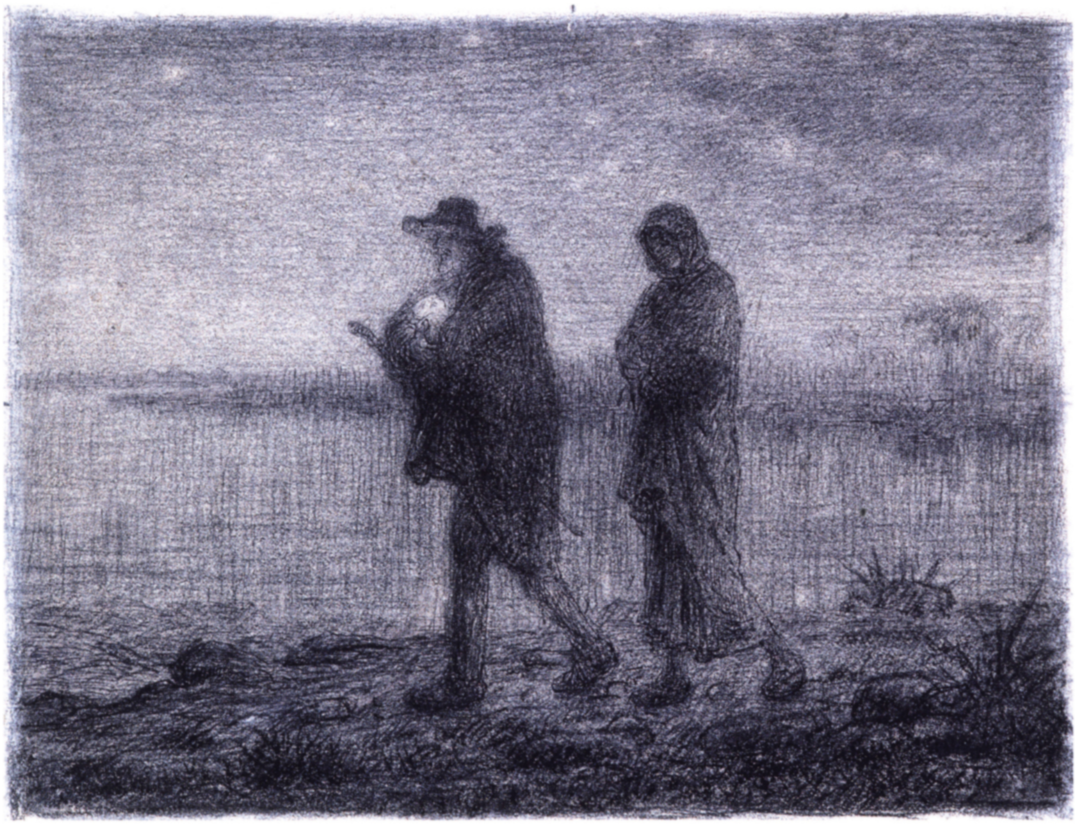
82
Jean-François Millet
The Peasant Family, 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 110.4 × 81 cm
Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum
Wales, Cardiff (bequeathed by Margaret
Davies, 1963)

“That Great Poet”: Millet and the Post-Impressionists

Abigail Yoder



83
Jean-François Millet
The Flight into Egypt, c. 1864
Crayon with pen and ink on paper,
31.7 × 40.7 cm
Art Institute of Chicago (The Regenstein
Collection)



84
Jean-François Millet
The Flight into Egypt, c. 1864
Black crayon on paper, 26.5 × 34 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Jean-François Millet had become accepted as one of the masters of French painting. However, his influence on the younger artists working during this time has often gone overlooked. His focus on naturalistic depictions of Barbizon peasants and their labor, environment, and everyday life seems at odds with the artists of the Post-Impressionist movement, who turned their attention to expression and emotion through simplified forms and non-naturalistic color. Yet for all Millet's supposed realism, his images of peasants are often abbreviated down to basic shapes, sometimes even reduced to decorative silhouettes.[1] This modern aspect of his style had been recognized by critics and artists dating back to his lifetime (see the essay "'This Artistic Fauve': Millet as Modern Artist") and became especially important to the later generation of painters at the end of the nineteenth century.

Millet, in many ways, served as a precursor to the Post-Impressionists, who in turn adopted themes and compositions from him as a way of developing new aesthetic languages that combined observation, imagination, and exaggerated formal qualities. Furthermore, these artists saw in Millet's paintings and drawings an expressive, poetic vision akin to their own. This essay explores Millet's impact on the Post-Impressionists, relying on the writings of critics as well as the artists themselves, many of whom praised Millet—not only for his depictions of peasants and the natural world, but for the abstract, synthesizing style and suggestive poetry of his works.

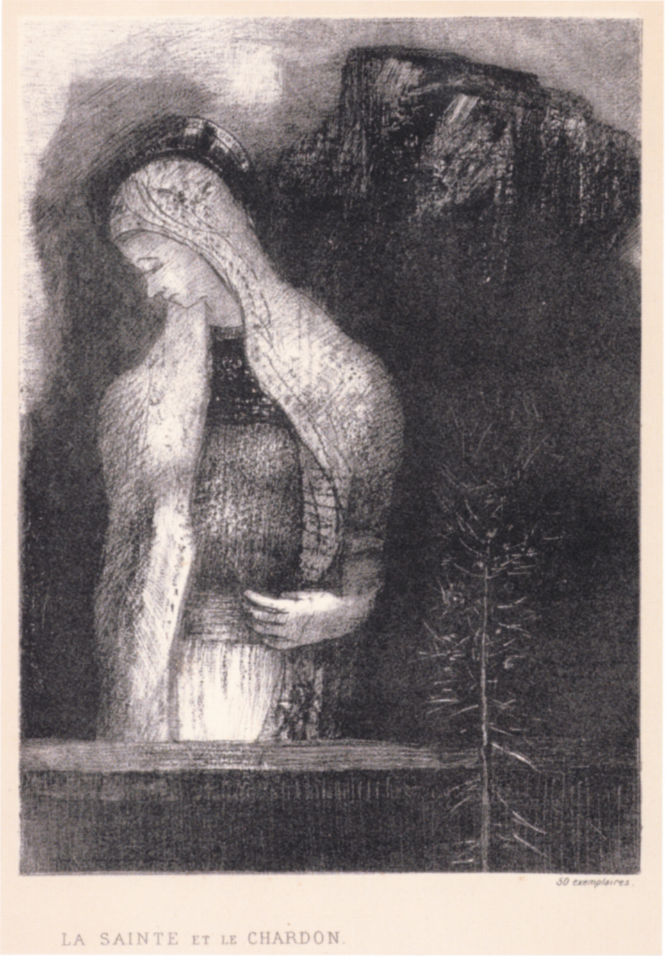
Millet, *Synthétiste*

Even during his lifetime, the critical reception of Millet's work sometimes emphasized—rarely positively—this tendency for abstraction, rather than his focus on reality. Paul de Saint-Victor, a frequent and vociferous critic of Millet's paintings exhibited at the Salons, excoriated his works in 1863.[2] In his attacks, he rather presciently described Millet's technique: "he no longer draws figures, he traces syntheses."[3] While intended to demean the crude, abbreviated manner with which Millet treated his peasant figures, this statement instead came to define a significant component of Millet's modernism for the next generation of painters.

After his death in 1875 and a subsequent surge in exhibitions and sales of his work, a fuller range of Millet's work became known to the public, leading to a more complete view of his aesthetic.[4] By the late 1880s, avant-garde artists and critics picked up on this abbreviating tendency in his work, with considerably more approval than their predecessors. In his introduction to the 1887 exhibition catalogue of Millet's works at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paul Mantz repeated the idea, this time as praise for Millet's innovative style, describing how the artist "simplified the drawing, eliminated secondary features, enlarged the silhouettes, expanded the horizons. This method, which entrusts a central role to thought, was not bad for him. Millet was an abbreviator and synthesizer" (84).[5] Shortly after, in 1889, during the run of the Exposition Universelle—where Millet's works were featured prominently—the poet and critic Albert Hüe essentially paraphrased Mantz in an article in *La Revue normande et parisienne*, stating unequivocally: "Millet was a synthetist."[6]

Critics often used the term "synthetism" to refer primarily to Millet's simplifying style—the economy of form and detail in service of the whole—yet in the latter stages of the nineteenth century it became inextricably tied to the avant-garde aesthetic of combining observed reality with the artist's own subjective vision, imagination, or memory.[7] And despite the naturalistic appearance of Millet's depictions of life at Barbizon, his images were a complex blending of memory and observation in which reality was subject to his own artistic vision. It was precisely this aspect of Millet's style—modifying and simplifying forms and superimposing his own vision on the natural world—that was lauded by Post-Impressionist artists and critics.

Millet's influence is most clearly seen in Vincent van Gogh, who expounded in his many letters on his reverence for the French artist (see the essay "Van Gogh and 'Père Millet'"). Yet many other late nineteenth-century artists also looked to Millet's example. The Symbolist painter Odilon Redon wrote often about Millet and his importance to later generations of painters in his personal journal and published art criticism. As early as 1867, he reflected on Millet and his contemporaries Gustave Courbet and Theodore Rousseau, commenting on the "direct and dominating influence" they had on younger artists.[8] He also wrote specifically of Millet's "great originality," saying, "He looked for and found in the *plein air* an absolutely new world. He gave moral life to clouds. Trees and all the inanimate nature of the countryside live in the life of man. [...] There is on this page a truly new poetry."[9] The influence of Millet's


30 exemplaires
LA SAINTE ET LE CHARDON

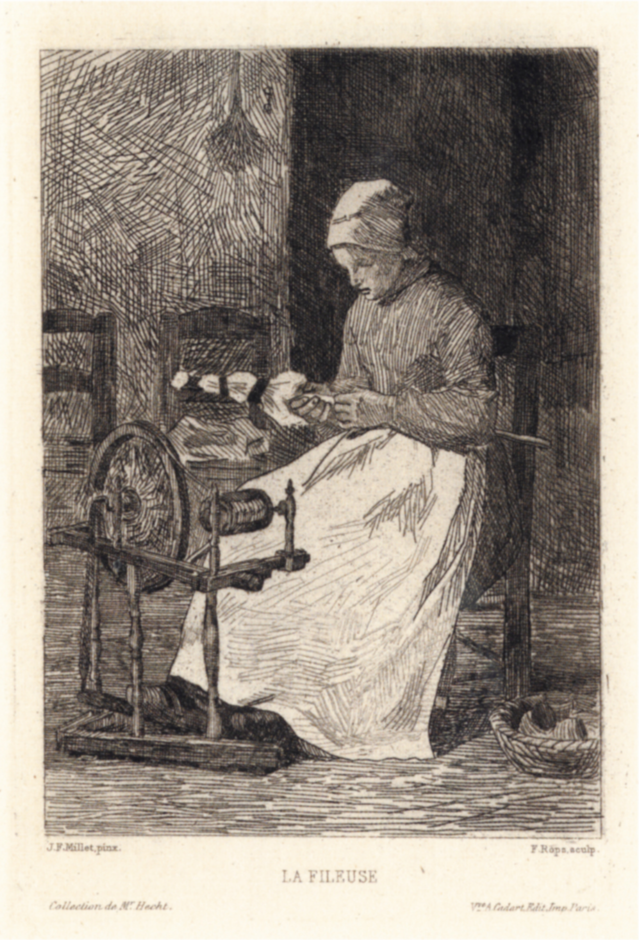
85
Odilon Redon
Female Saint and Thistle, 1890
Lithograph, 50.9 × 38.6 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(State of the Netherlands)

poetic style can be seen in Redon's own tenebrous drawings and lithographs, in which he, like the older artist, viewed the natural world through the lens of imagination. Redon's use of simplified forms and strong interplays of light and dark further illustrates the influence Millet had on his works (83, 85).

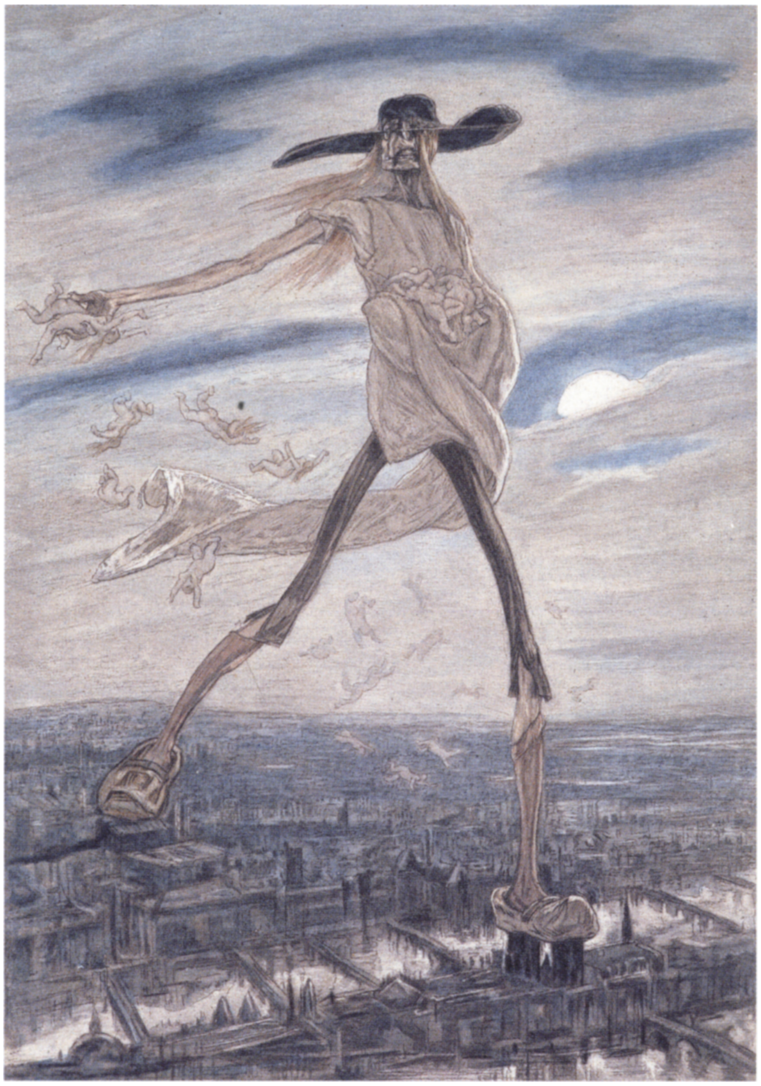
The Belgian Symbolist Félicien Rops, known for his disturbing, sexually charged imagery, also admired Millet, whom he called "the master of both 'Biblism' and Eroticism."[10] Many of Rops's prints and drawings portrayed images of peasant labor done in the manner of Millet.[11] He was even commissioned to illustrate Alexandre Piedagnel's 1876 biography of the artist, *J.-F. Millet: Souvenirs de Barbizon*, providing the frontispiece and a reproduction of Millet's *Woman Spinning* (28, 86).[12] Millet's influence is also seen in Rops's surprising adaptation of the iconic *Sower* into the figure of Satan striding over the city of Paris (87). While Millet's heroic peasant sows seeds in the fields, Rops depicts Satan scattering seeds of evil—in the form of women—across the city, transforming Millet's picture into a unnerving fantasy world, critiquing modern women and sexuality.[13]

Other Symbolist critics also praised Millet's synthesizing aesthetic. Joséphin Péladan wrote in 1883 on synthetism as a key component of modern art, as a way for artists to go beyond simple observation of nature. He emphasized his admiration for what he called the "synthetic landscapes" of Millet and his Barbizon contemporaries as examples of this.[14] Albert Aurier, whose Symbolist art theory explicitly emphasized synthesis as a hallmark of the avant-garde,[15] also highlighted Millet's synthetism. In a note that was never published during his lifetime but which was discovered by the art historian Patricia Townley Mathews in 1984, Aurier commented on the significance of synthesis in art, comparing Millet and Gauguin as synthesizers of emotions in their paintings.[16]

Millet's synthetism, and its influence on later painters, is closely related to that of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Indeed, in the latter part of the century both Millet and Puvis appealed to conservatives and the avant-garde alike. During Puvis's lifetime, critics often compared the two artists in terms of their "rustic naturalism."[17] His murals depicting the life of St. Genevieve for the Panthéon—for which Millet was also commissioned but died before completing—were praised for their images of religious virtue, leading one critic to call him the Millet of "grand art."[18] In 1895 the poet Emile Bergerat claimed that Puvis had inherited from Millet the image of the tragic laborer.[19] For his part, Puvis both knew and admired Millet—it is likely that they met in the early 1860s[20]—but bristled at the suggestion that he was in some way following in the older artist's footsteps. In a letter of 1888 he rejected comparisons of his art to that of his "godfathers" Corot and Millet, stating, "nothing is more false."[21] However, his dismissal of the comparison seems to have been more a complaint about critics denying him his own originality, rather than a full rejection of Millet's importance, and despite Puvis's objections


J.F.Millet pinx.
F.Rops sculp.
LA FILEUSE
Collection de Mr Hecht.
Vve A. Cadart Edit. Imp. Paris

86
Félicien Rops
Woman Spinning (La Fileuse) (after Millet)
From Alexandre Piedagnel, *J.-F. Millet: Souvenirs de Barbizon*, Paris 1876, n.p.

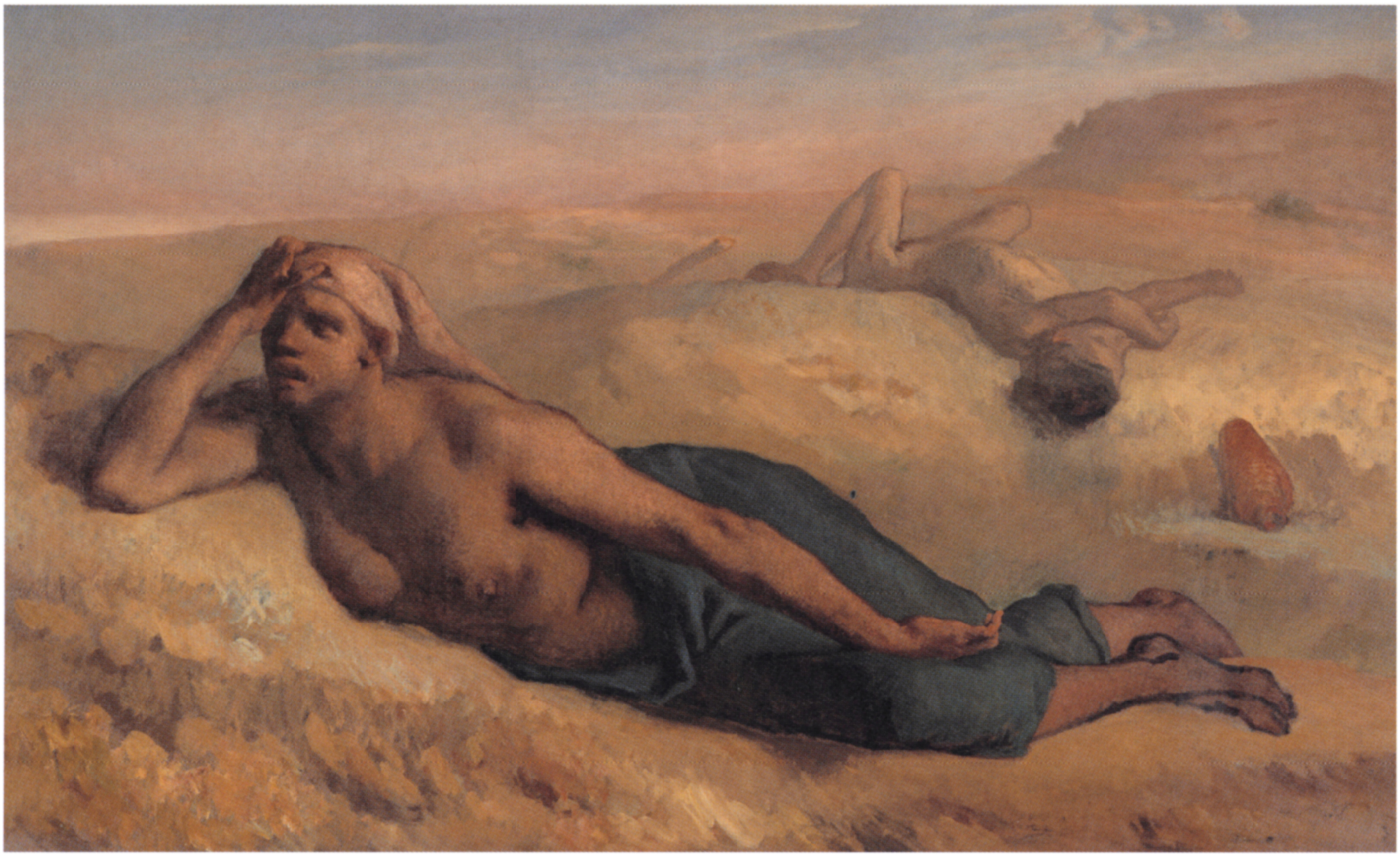


87
Félicien Rops
Satan Sowing Tares,
from *Les Sataniques*, 1882
Color aquatint, 46.2 × 32 cm
Musée Félicien Rops, Namur

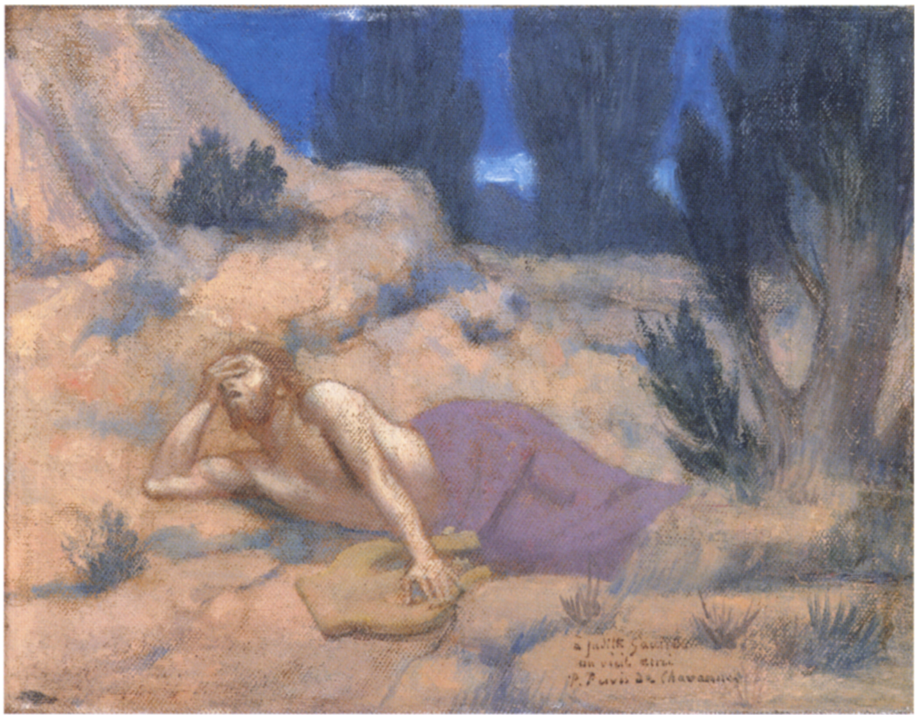
there are undeniable parallels between his works and Millet's.

Puvis's style in both his decorative murals and his easel paintings is classicizing but still simplified, bearing a close resemblance to Millet's syntheses. Their stylistic similarities can be seen in Millet's striking painting of *Hagar and Ishmael* (88) and Puvis's later small composition of *Orpheus* (89). Puvis's mournful Orpheus, who lies prone and despairing in a barren landscape, seems to mimic the pose of Millet's Hagar. This sprawling pose is not unique to Millet—similar examples go back to Jacques-Louis David and can also be seen in more contemporary works such as Frédéric Bazille's *Ruth and Boaz* (90)—yet the elongated and slightly awkward form of Hagar seems to anticipate that of Puvis's Orpheus.[22] Moreover, Millet's picture has been described in terms of decorative fresco painting due to its monumentality, simplified forms, and compressed rendering of space and scale,[23] all of which were important principles of the mural aesthetic of Puvis. Despite these visual similarities, it is unclear whether Puvis knew Millet's painting, as it remained in the older artist's studio until his death.[24] If not explicitly inspired by *Hagar and Ishmael*, Puvis's *Orpheus* still certainly suggests Millet's influence in its use of simplified forms, flattened, non-naturalistic space, and the creation of an evocative, poetic mood.

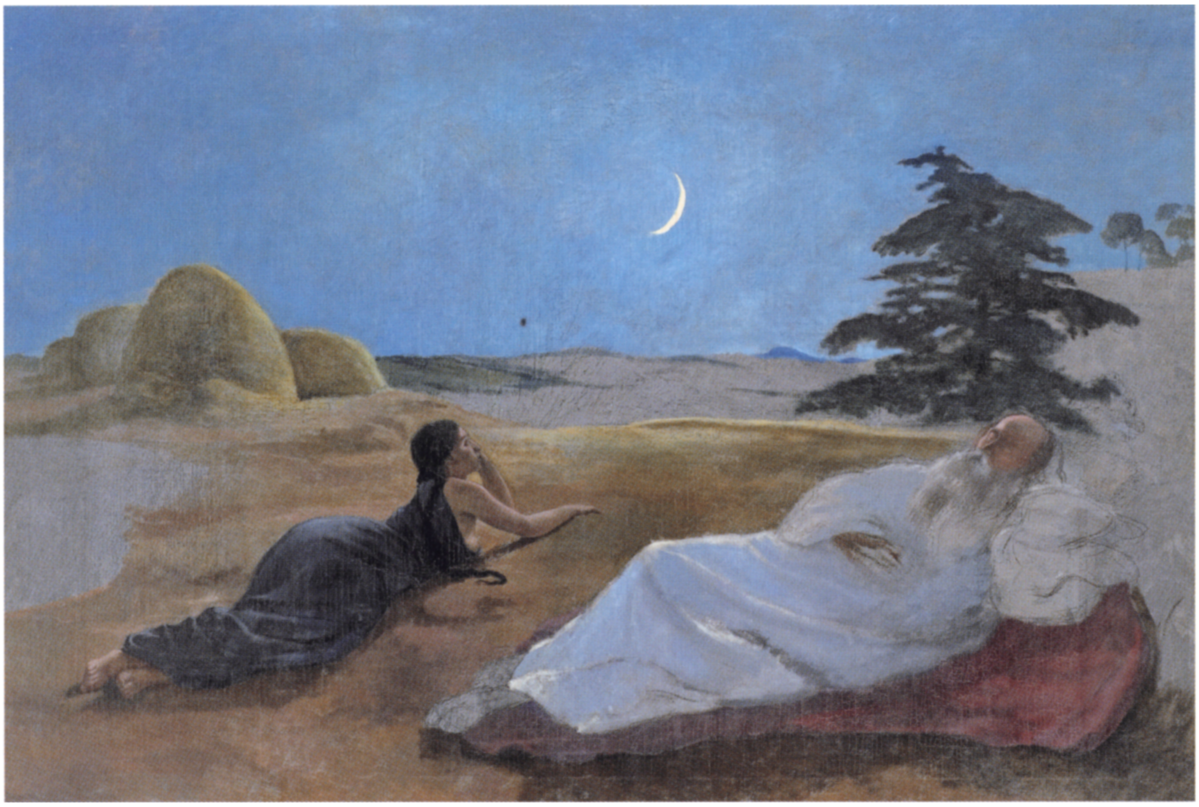
A more direct influence for Puvis was *The Angelus* (3), which was garnering increasing attention and popularity in the 1880s. A far cry from Millet's monumental and sometimes threatening peasants of the 1850s and 1860s, the poor farmer and his wife in *The Angelus* were celebrated for their piety, and the painting itself was lauded



88
Jean-François Millet
Hagar and Ishmael, 1848–49
Oil on canvas, 147 × 236.5 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague


à Judith Gautier
un vieil ami
P. Puvis de Chavannes

89
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
Orpheus, 1883
Oil on canvas, 21.5 × 28 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

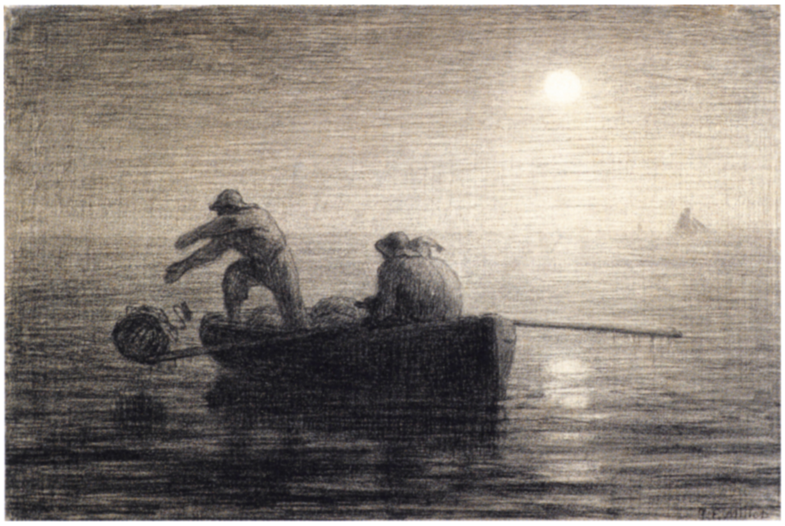


90
Frédéric Bazille
Ruth and Boaz, c. 1870
Oil on canvas, 137.5 × 202.8 cm
Musée Fabre, Montpellier Mediterannée Métropole

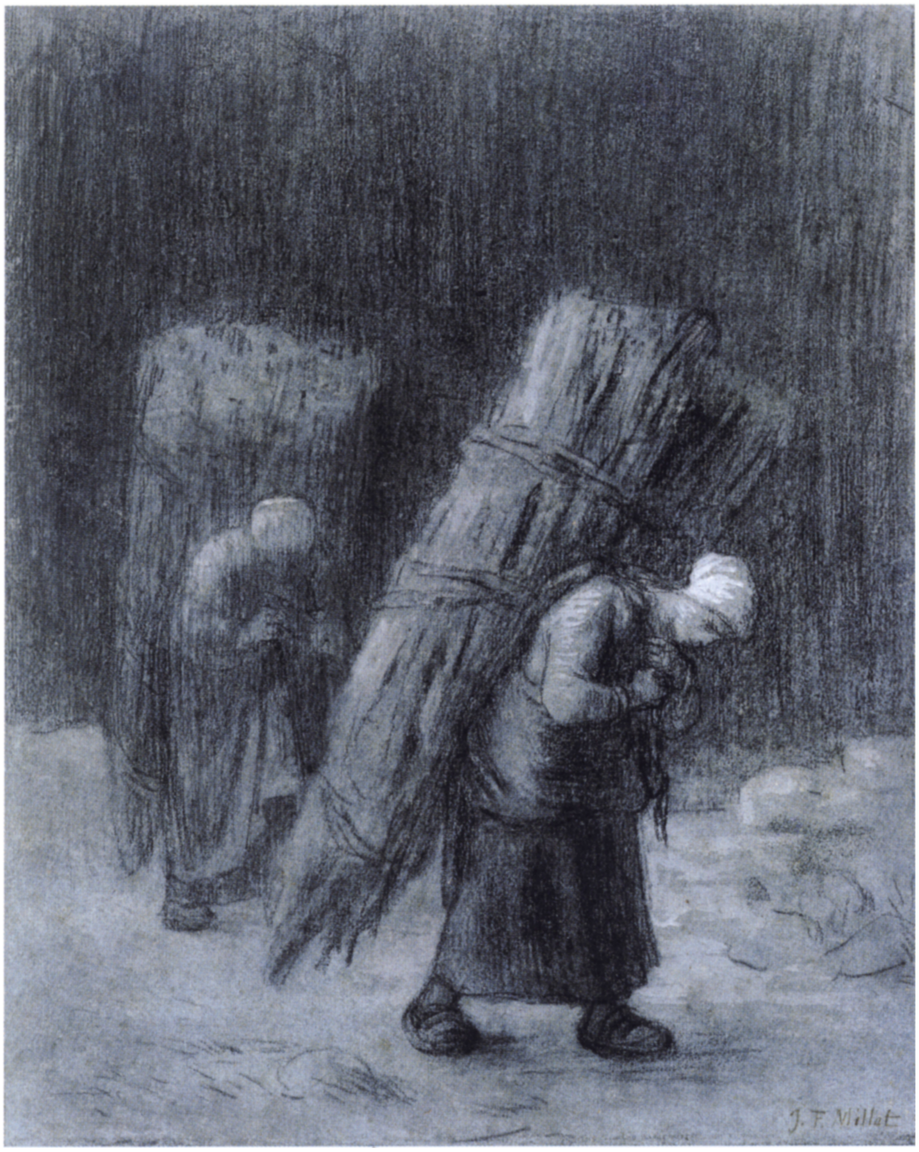
as a more conservative image. Yet still apparent in this painting was Millet's tendency for simplification of forms and reduction of details.[25] Puvis admittedly admired *The Angelus*, since he too sought to explore humble piety in the wake of the rapidly developing modern world.[26] His painting *The Poor Fisherman* (165) parallels *The Angelus* in its treatment of the solemn fisherman, shown with his head bowed in prayer. Indeed, preliminary drawings (166) for the figure of the fisherman show striking similarities to Millet's praying peasant, suggesting that *The Angelus* may well have been the model for Puvis's painting.[27] The simplified figures and sparse landscape in *The Poor Fisherman* take the reductive abstraction also seen in *The Angelus* to new extremes. Puvis's decorative synthetism is in some way a descendant of Millet's synthesis of idealized naturalism and would in turn go on to impact the younger generation of artists, including the Neo-Impressionists and the painters of the Pont-Aven School.

Millet, Seurat, and Neo-Impressionism

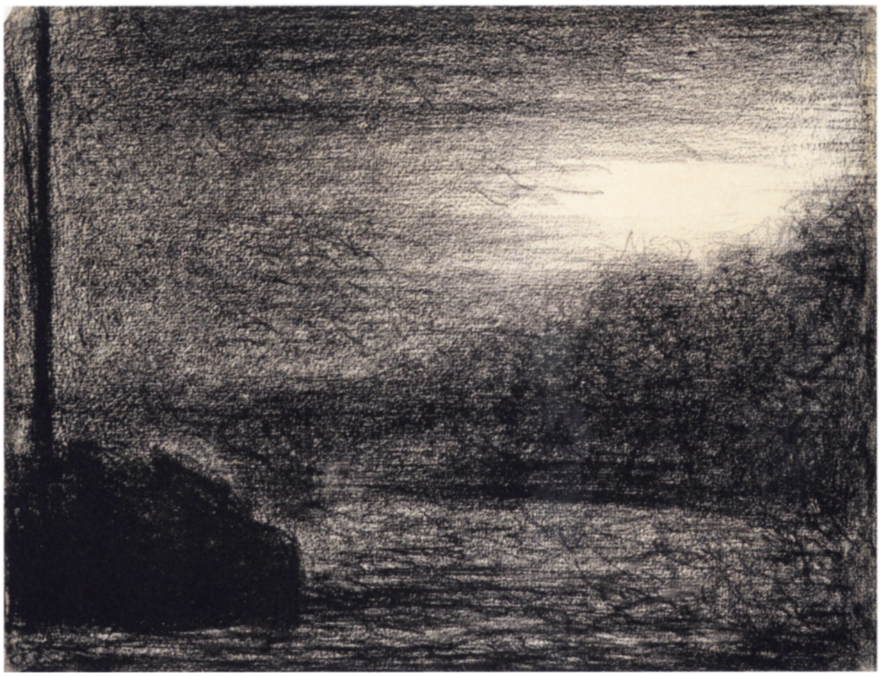
For the Neo-Impressionist artists like Georges Seurat, Charles Angrand, and others, Millet's influence was twofold. This group in general held socio-anarchist beliefs, so for them, Millet's imagery of peasant labor immediately following the 1848 revolutions would have had a considerable impact. Millet's aesthetic, too, played a role in the development of the Neo-Impressionists' style, particularly for Seurat. Through his studies of visual theory and composition, including close readings of Charles Blanc's *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867), Seurat understood the importance of the synthetic nature of painting. Much like Millet, Seurat employed a visual language of simplification, with forms reduced to their essences.[28]



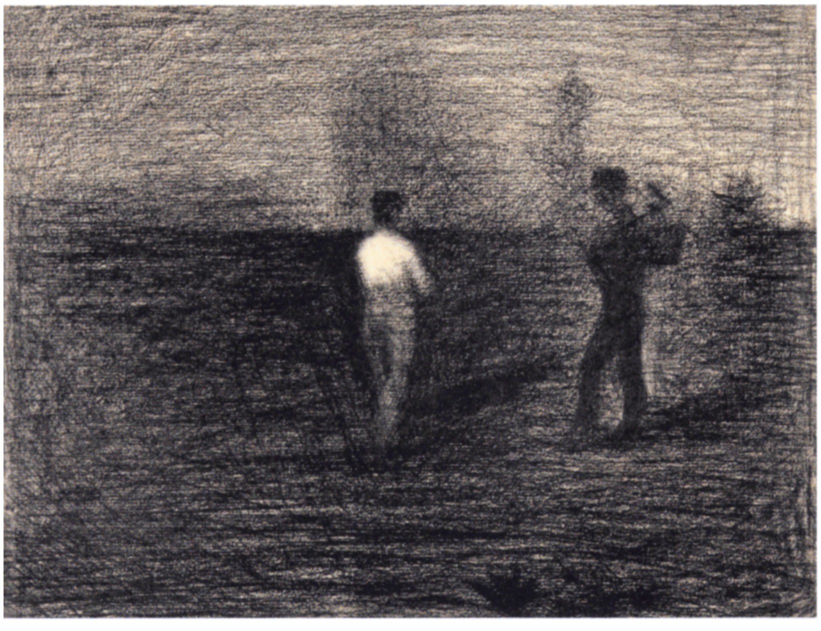
91
Jean-François Millet
The Lobster Fishermen, 1857–60
Black crayon on paper, 32.6 × 49 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du
Louvre, Paris



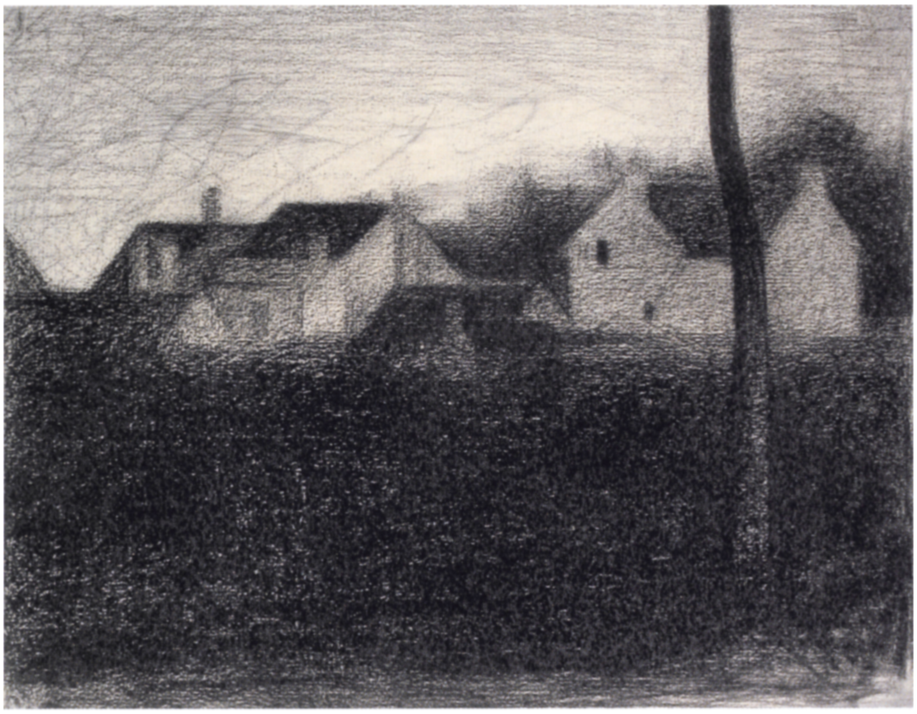
92
Jean-François Millet
Women Carrying Faggots, c. 1858
Charcoal and gouache on paper,
34.3 × 27.6 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(Robert Lehman Collection, 1975)



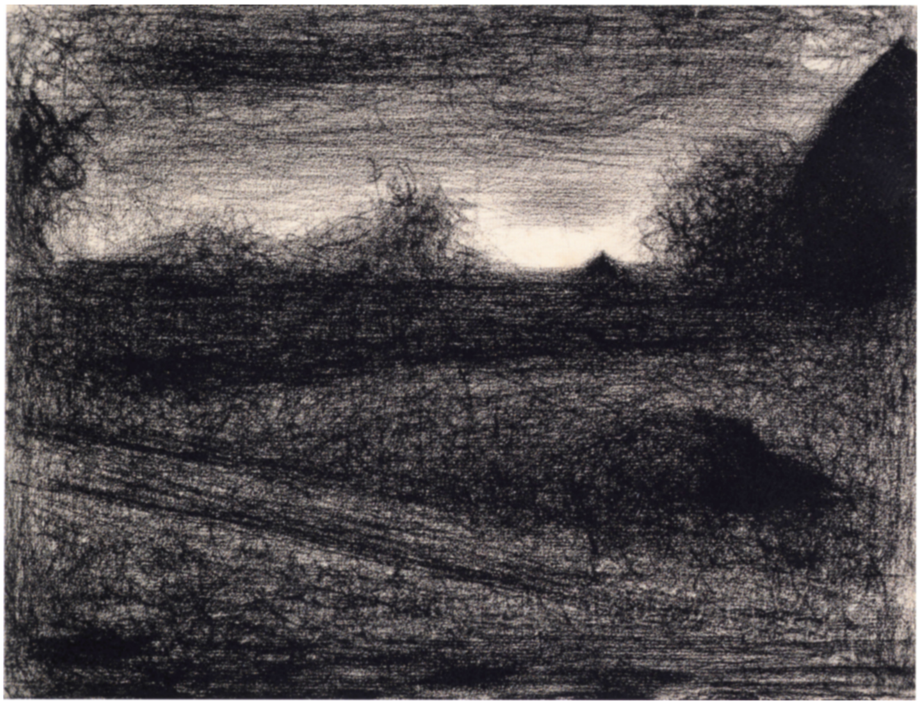
93
Georges Seurat
The Barge, c. 1882–83
Conté crayon on paper, 24 × 31 cm
Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Cambridge (gift of Therese Kuhn Straus in memory of her husband, Herbert N. Straus, Harvard Class of 1903)



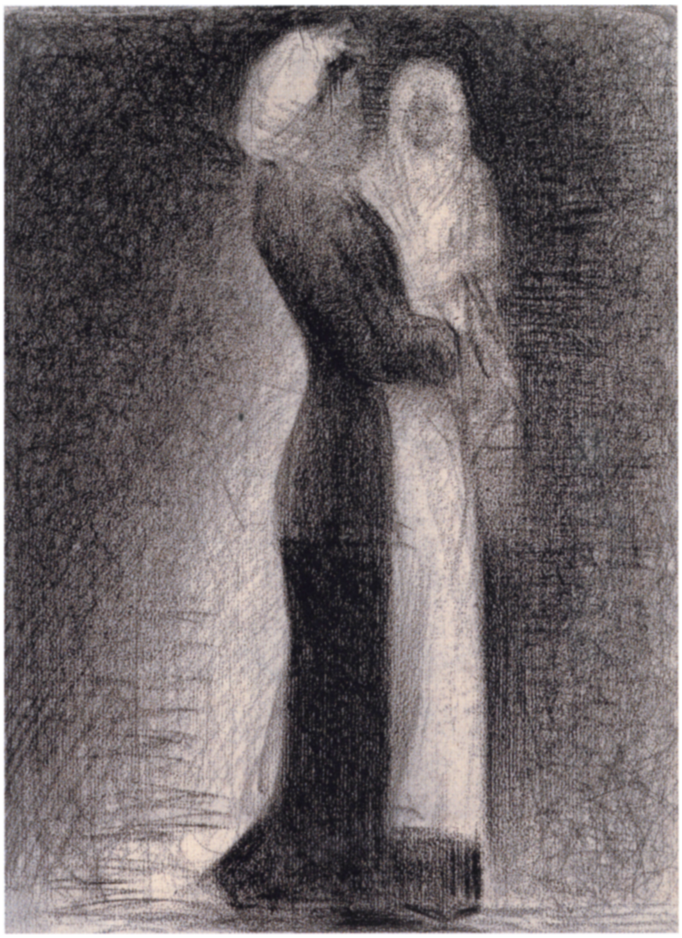
94
Georges Seurat
Peasants, 1881–84
Conté crayon on paper, 24.8 × 31.6 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot, 1967)



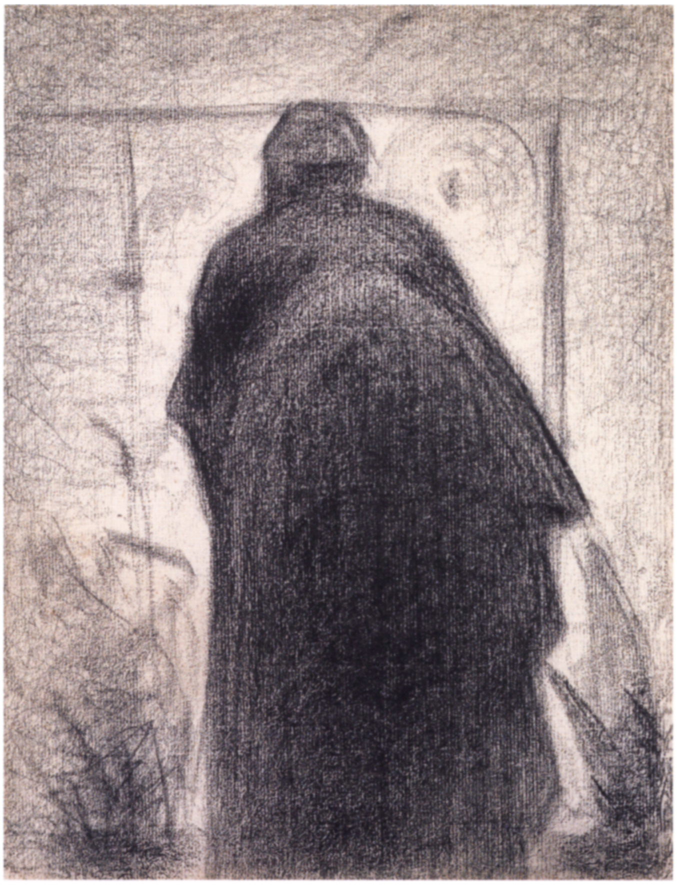
95
Georges Seurat
Landscape with Houses, 1881–82
Conté crayon on paper, 24.9 × 31.9 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971)



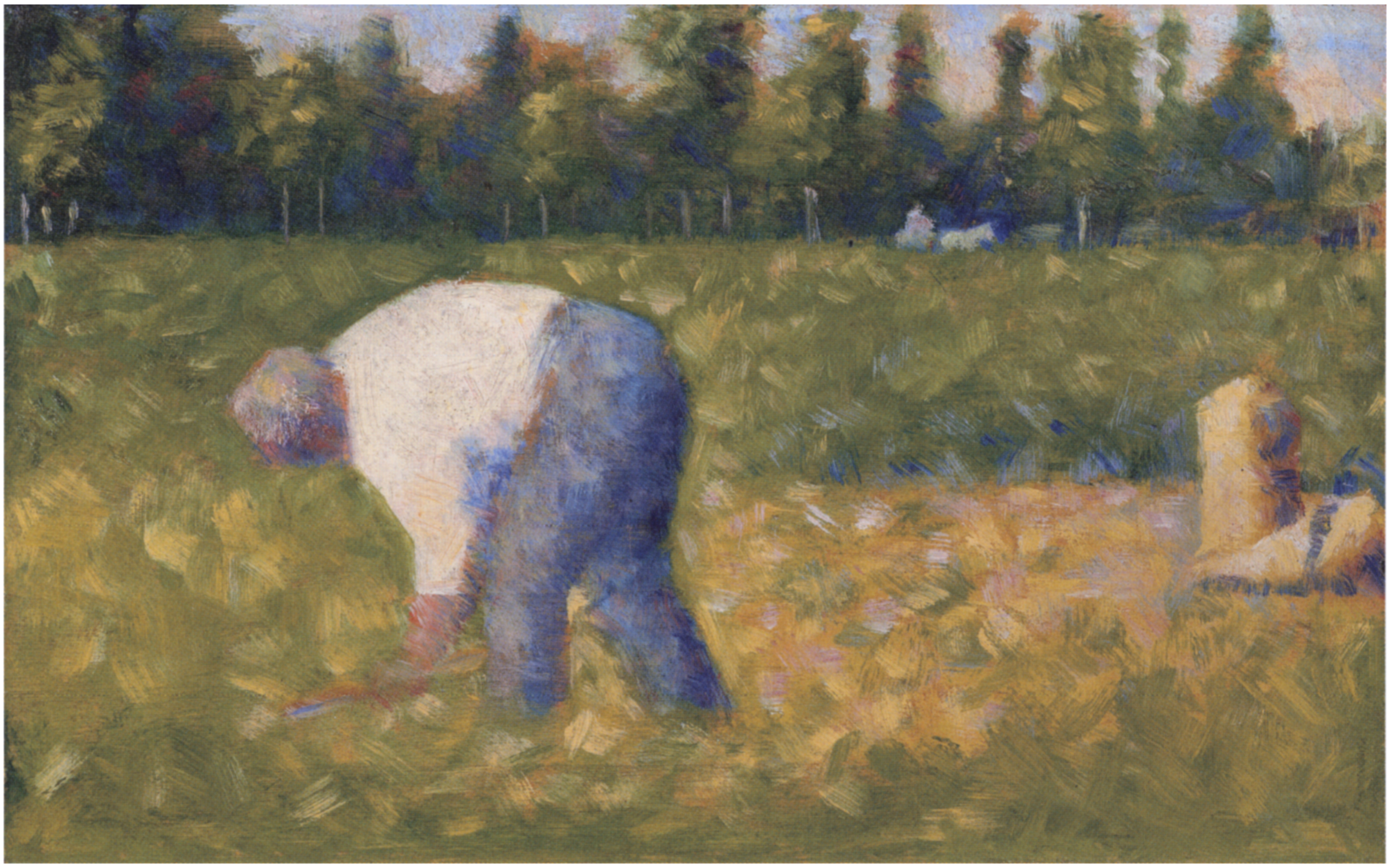
96
Georges Seurat
Haystacks, c. 1883
Black Conté crayon on paper, 24.1 × 32.4 cm
Private collection



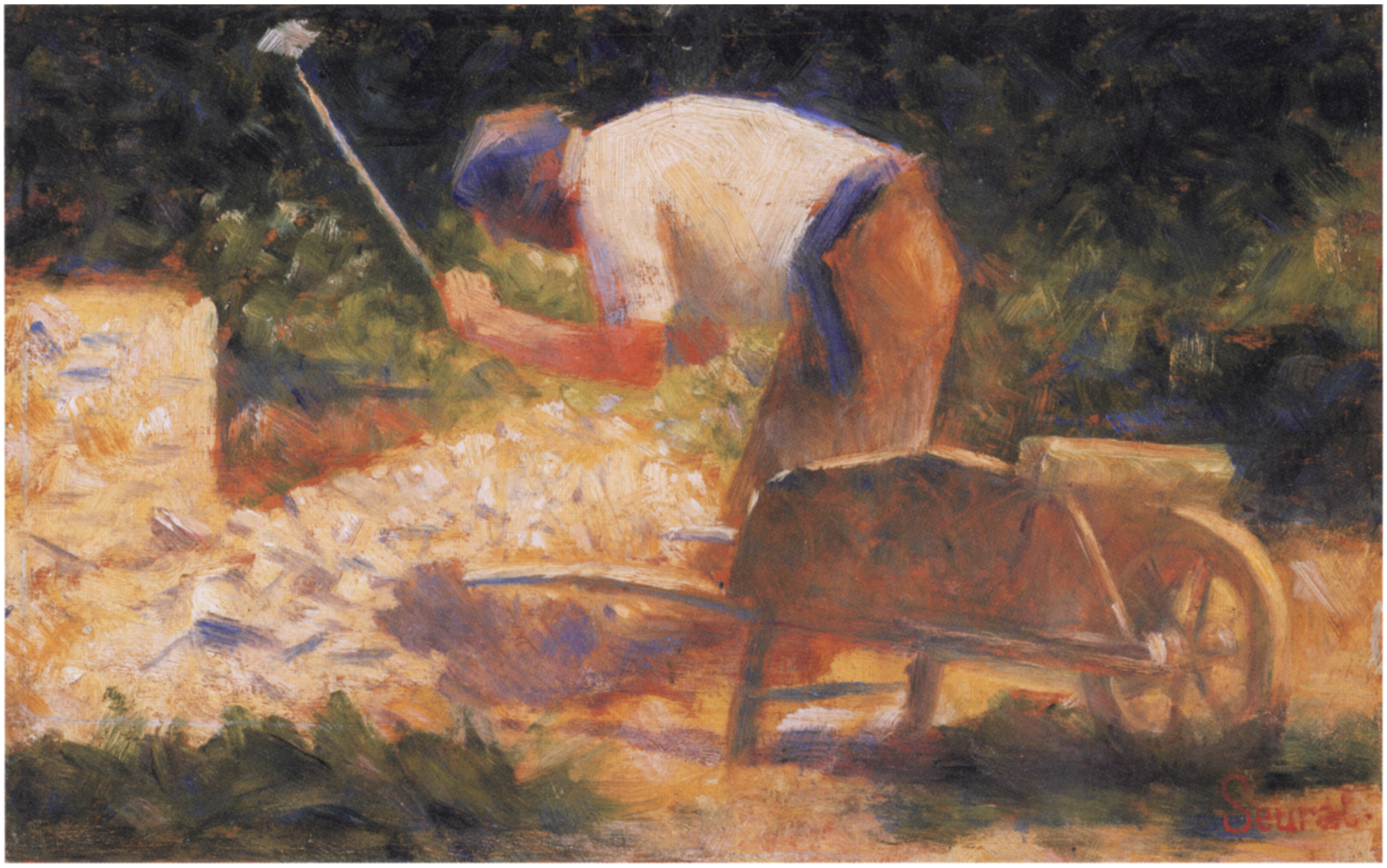
97
Georges Seurat
The Nursemaid, 1882–83
Black Conté crayon on paper,
30.5 × 23.5 cm
Private collection



98
Georges Seurat
Woman Bending, Viewed from Behind, c. 1885
Conté crayon on paper, 31.1 × 24.2 cm
De Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums
of San Francisco (memorial gift from
Dr. T. Edward and Tullah Hanley, Bradford,
Pennsylvania)



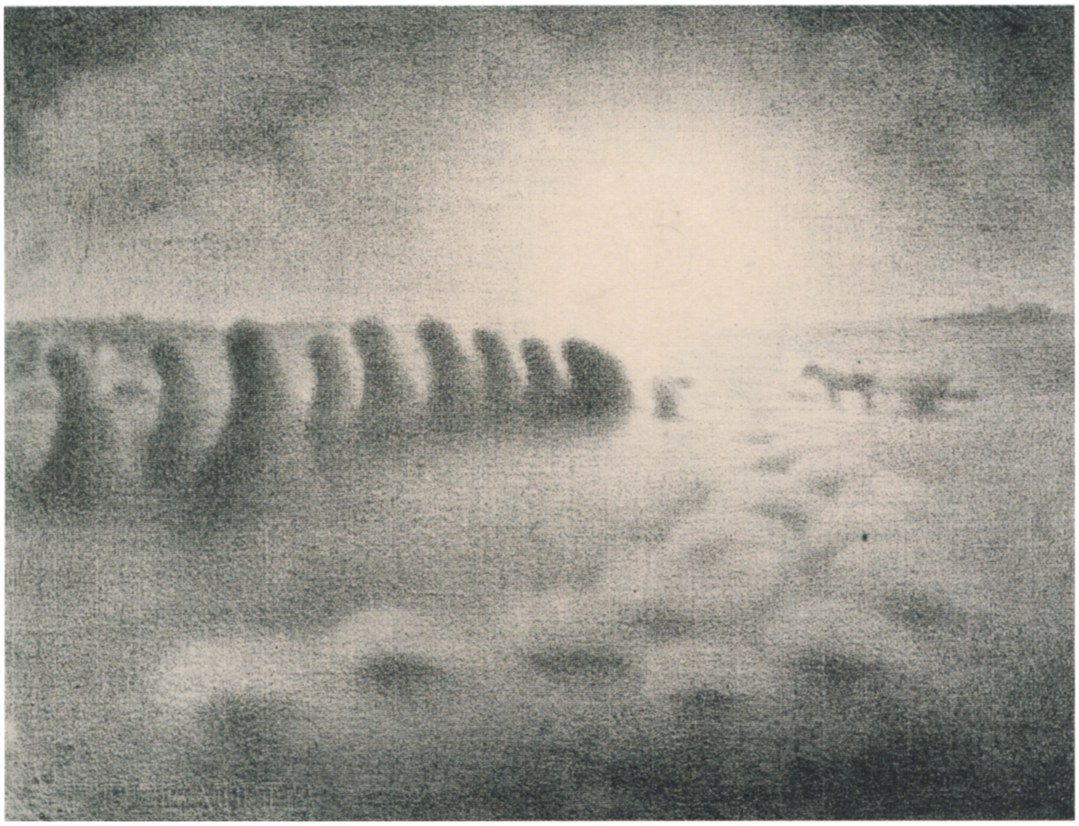
99
Georges Seurat
Peasant Laboring, 1882–83
Oil on board, 16 × 25 cm
Menard Art Museum, Komaki



100
Georges Seurat
The Stone Breaker, 1882
Oil on panel, 15.6 × 24.8 cm
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Millet's tenebrous drawings (91, 92) are most akin to the works of the Neo-Impressionists and can be seen as leading directly to those of Seurat, who owned reproductions of Millet works.[29] Seurat's Conté crayon drawings, such as *Peasants* and *The Nursemaid* (94, 97), transform human figures into highly structured silhouettes. This abstraction comes directly from Millet, as noted by the American art historian Robert Herbert: "Millet fortified and contributed to that characteristic of Seurat's style evident from the time of his earliest work, the reduction of natural form to its most economical and characteristic expression."[30] Likewise, Seurat's depictions of riverscapes and landscapes (93, 95, 96) derive from the older artist's imagery of moonlit waters and the open plains of Barbizon, using the Conté crayon to emphasize contrasts of light and dark.

Seurat's choice of subject matter in both his drawings and paintings also closely parallels Millet's. He often depicted peasants, drawing inspiration from the suburban laborers he found around Paris, but also occasionally traveling to Barbizon in search of models.[31] However, rather than focusing on the physical nature of their work, Seurat used these figures as a way of exploring the formal qualities within the pictures. Paintings such as *Peasant Laboring* and *The Stone Breaker* (99, 100) and drawings such as *Woman Bending, Viewed from Behind* (98) clearly reference the laboring peasants in paintings by Millet such as *The Gleaners* (22). Seurat adopted Millet-like imagery—in this case, the bending figures—abbreviating them into rounded masses that emphasized the underlying structure of the composition, reinforced through the interplay of colors or the contrasts of black and white.[32]

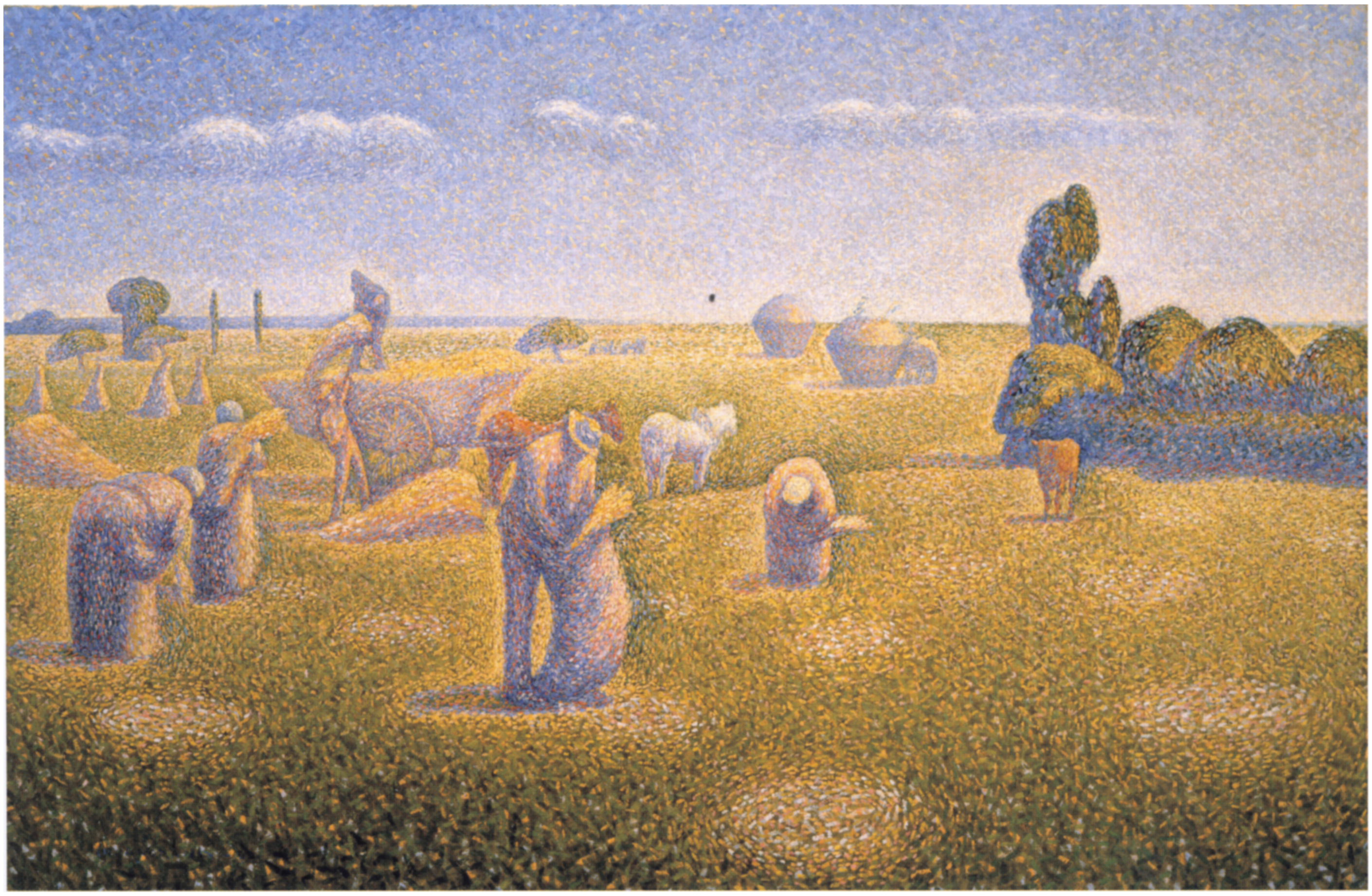


101
Charles Angrand
End of the Harvest, 1890s
Conté crayon on paper, 48.8 × 63.5 cm
Cleveland Museum of Art

Millet's influence is also seen in the works of Angrand, who owned reproductions of Millet's works and whose drawings display characteristics similar to those of the older artist.[33] Like Seurat, Angrand was drawn to images of peasants working and emphasized the environments in which they labored almost as much as the peasants themselves. Drawings such as *End of the Harvest* (101) relied on abbreviated forms simplified down to basic shapes, building upon the model of Millet's earlier works. The interplay of light and dark, as well as the physical qualities of the Conté crayon on the textured paper, transformed the haystacks and peasants into waves of abstract patterns. Angrand's paintings, too, bore traces of Millet's influence, as seen in his *The Harvesters* (102). Here, Angrand, like Seurat, referenced the famous harvesting imagery of Millet's paintings, incorporating it into his refined Divisionist style.

Millet and the Pont-Aven School

Millet's synthetism perhaps finds its closest parallel in the works of Paul Gauguin, Emile Bernard, and the painters of the Pont-Aven School in the 1880s and 1890s. The artist colonies in Brittany were successors to the earlier Barbizon School, and to Millet specifically. Millet was a key figure for these later artists, who focused on the peasantry of supposedly untouched, "savage" regions of France, emphasizing a way of life that, like in Millet's Barbizon, was rapidly disappearing in reality.[34] Pont-Aven artists, like Millet before them, focused on peasant motifs but transformed them from straightforward observations to non-naturalistic visions. They used these images as a means of developing their formal experimentations in simplified form, compressed space, and expressive color into a style aptly termed Synthetism. Essentially,



102
Charles Angrand
The Harvesters, 1892
Oil on canvas, 79.1 × 123.5 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (gift of
Audrey Jones Beck)

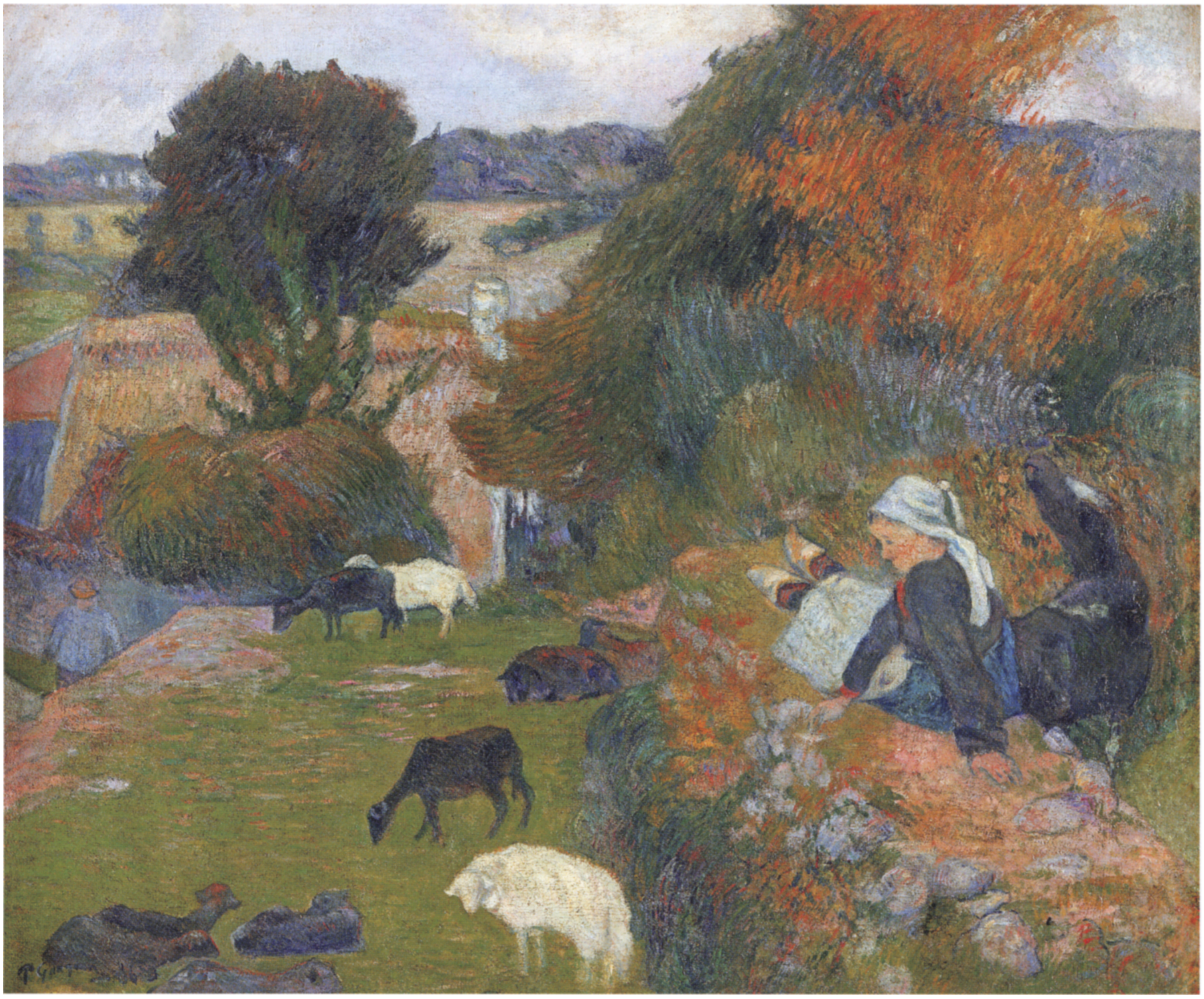
these artists built upon the earlier synthetic style of Millet, using peasant images as symbols to convey ideas about religion, emotion, and universal truths while also treating them as vehicles for aesthetic expression.

A number of the Pont-Aven artists invoked Millet's name in their writings of the period, often explicitly citing his influence. Despite being one of the most prolific writers of the Pont-Aven School, Gauguin's mentions of Millet are mostly limited to his art criticism, which was concerned less with Millet himself and more with attacking the French state for overlooking the modern masters.[35] However, in his notes on the 1889 Exposition Universelle, he referred to Millet as "that great poet" and one of the "unsung thinkers" of modern painting.[36] Connections between Millet and Gauguin were more clearly drawn by his fellow artists and contemporary critics. Indeed, it was Vincent and Theo van Gogh who looked to Gauguin as a sort of spiritual heir to Millet. In a letter to Theo in 1888, Vincent wrote of Gauguin, "I feel that he's more 'Millet' than I am."[37] He also compared Theo's support of and relationship with Gauguin to that of Millet and his friend Alfred Sensier.[38] The artist Armand Séguin also recognized in Gauguin some of Millet's influence, writing in *L'Occident* in March 1903, "Did Van Gogh have influence over Gauguin? I do not think so; on the contrary, he recalls Millet and Pissarro, or rather Pissarro who was often influenced by Millet."[39] As Gauguin's mentor, Camille Pissarro did play a role in his understanding of Millet, and Gauguin's images of peasant life, particularly those made during his first trip to Brittany, reflected the influence of Millet filtered through Pissarro.[40]

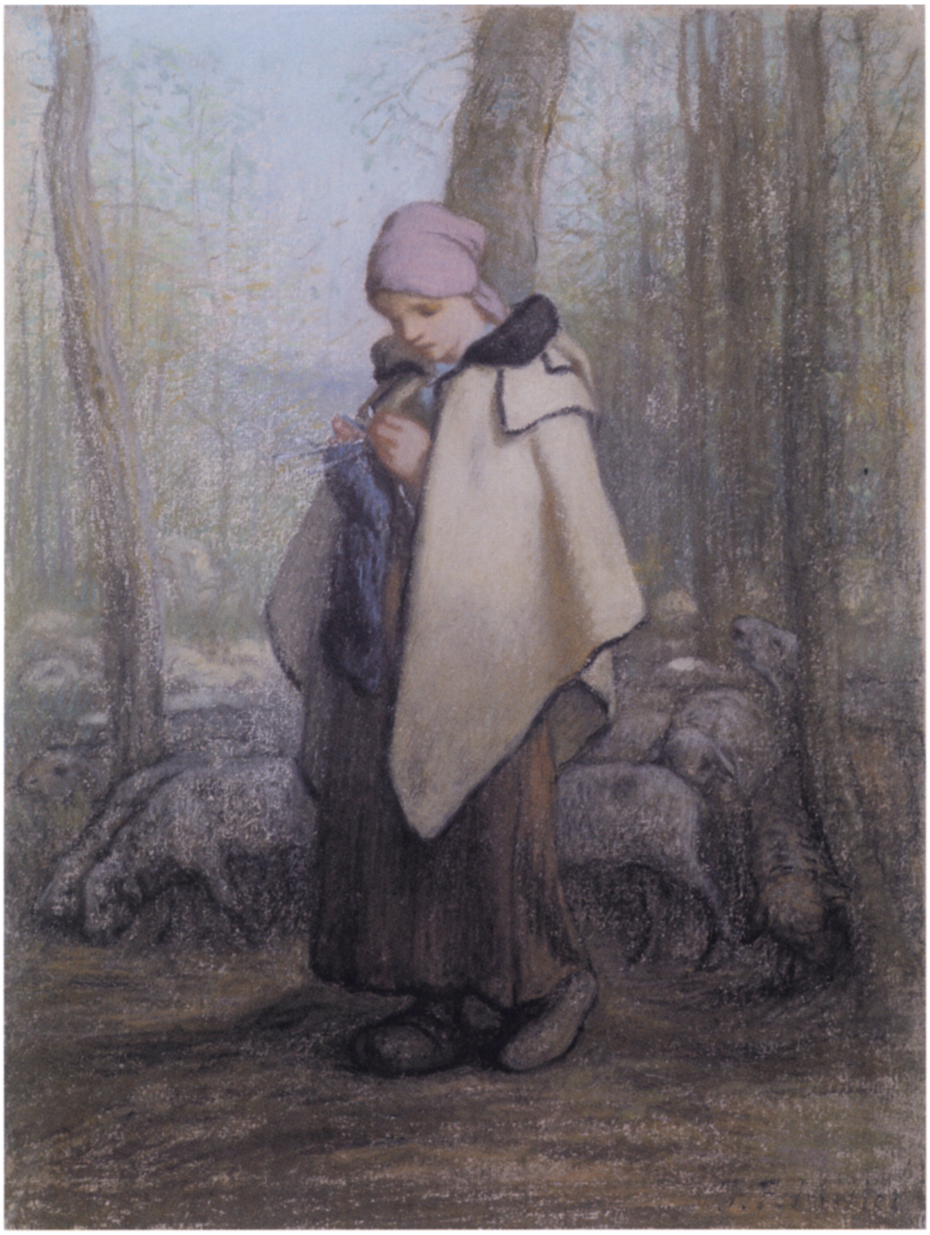
In his first visit to Pont-Aven in 1886, Gauguin tended to focus on the landscape of the region, painting images of the environs that were punctuated by small peasant figures.[41] Often, he turned to motifs closely associated with Millet, such as bathers, washerwomen, harvesters, and especially shepherdesses (103).[42] This imagery related closely to that of Pissarro, who often depicted peasant girls and shepherdesses resting in the fields. This, in turn, had been derived from Millet, for whom shepherdesses were a predilection (104).[43] Though his images appeared to be based on observation, Gauguin transformed his peasant motifs into symbols expressing some deeper meaning. The shepherdesses tended to become emblems for Eve falling into sin and disgrace, a common theme in Gauguin's works.[44] This may have been an unconscious reversal of Millet's shepherdesses, which at the time were being viewed as images of humble devotion and spirituality.[45] Gauguin also utilized the theme to elaborate his increasingly abstract aesthetic, frequently simplifying figures into flattened, silhouette-like forms reminiscent of Millet's own synthetic style.

During later stays in Pont-Aven, Gauguin continued to mine Millet's works for inspiration, focusing particularly on the image of the bending woman from *The Gleaners* (22). This figure appeared in various iterations in Gauguin's works throughout his time in Pont-Aven and Le Pouldu, but also, significantly, in works executed in Arles with Vincent van Gogh. His *The Wine Harvest* (*Human Misery*) (105) depicts two gleaning figures in the background as well as a standing figure to the left, all dressed in traditional Breton costume, while in the foreground a woman sits with her head in her hands, staring morosely off into the distance. This main figure calls to mind another of Millet's works, *Vineyard Laborer Resting* (106), which would have been known to Van Gogh and likely to Gauguin as well.[46] Millet's peasant figure is also shown seated in the midst of the grape harvest, momentarily resting, with the difficulty of his labor apparent in his face and slumping body. Gauguin's figure, however, retains a somewhat dreamlike quality, less marred by physical labor than Millet's earlier peasant. *Vineyard Laborer Resting*, perhaps more than any other of his works, captures the fatalism inherent in Millet's imagery: the endless burden of human existence.[47]

Emile Bernard, Gauguin's younger contemporary at Pont-Aven, was himself a great admirer of Millet, whose influence can be seen in Bernard's works from this period, even as he began exploring the use of flattened forms and non-naturalistic color. A critic as much as a painter, Bernard wrote frequently on the significance of Millet and his importance to the later generations of artists working at



103
Paul Gauguin
The Breton Shepherdess, 1886
Oil on canvas, 60.4 × 73.3 cm
Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Newcastle upon Tyne (bequest of Mrs. D.M. Fulford via The Art Fund, 1945)



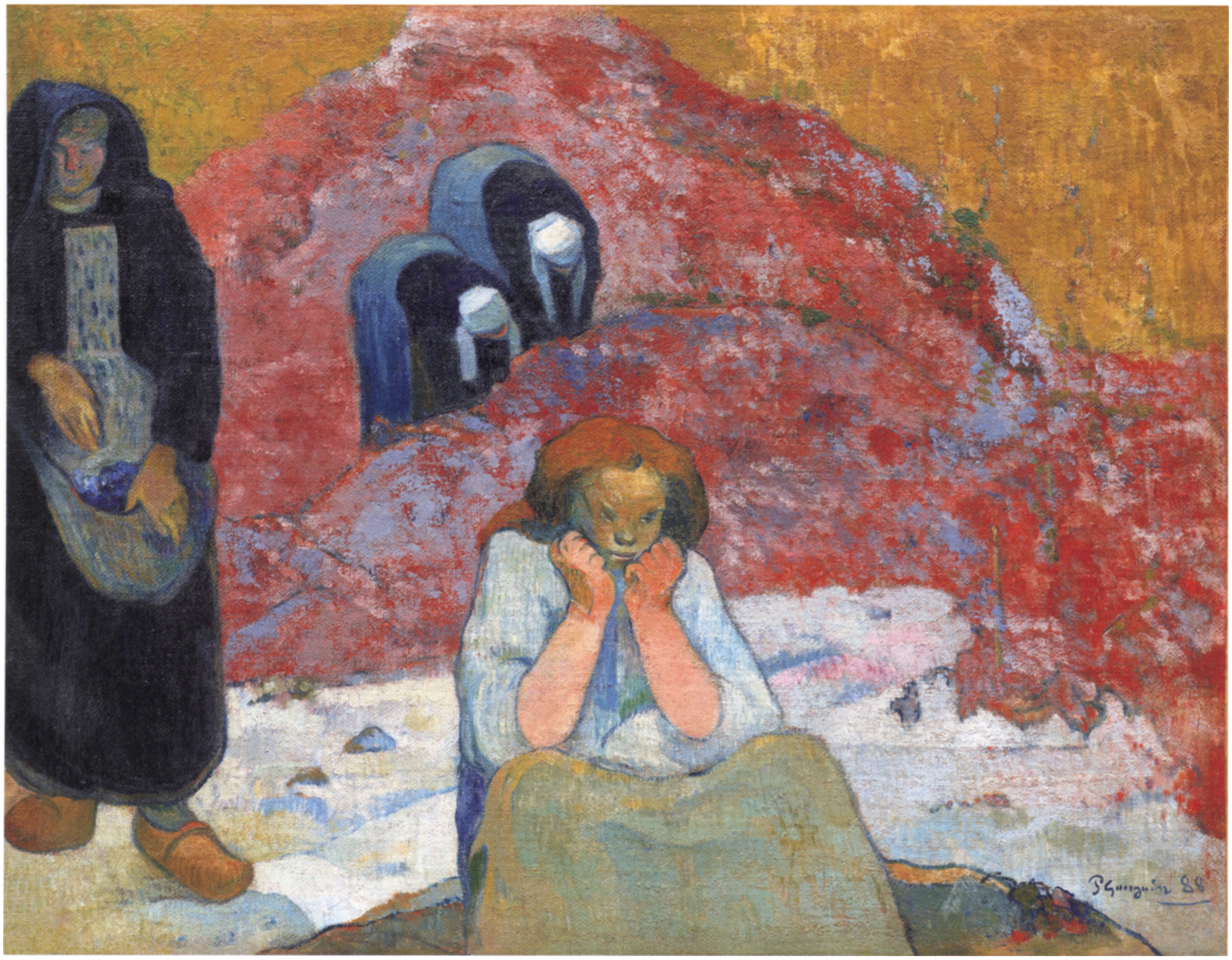
104
Jean-François Millet
The Knitting Shepherdess, 1856–57
Pastel on paper, 33.7 × 25.4 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum (gift of the J. Lionberger Davis Art Trust)

the end of the nineteenth century. In a review in *Le Moderniste illustré* of the 1889 Exposition Universelle, Bernard referred to Millet as "the great poet of lines and values," stating further that no one (with the exception of Corot) had better mastered the ability to create silhouetted forms.[48] This use of silhouettes was particularly significant in the development of the Synthetist aesthetic, in which artists reduced forms to flat patterns against backgrounds of pure color. Bernard's comment suggests that this stylistic tendency had precursors in Millet's drawings.

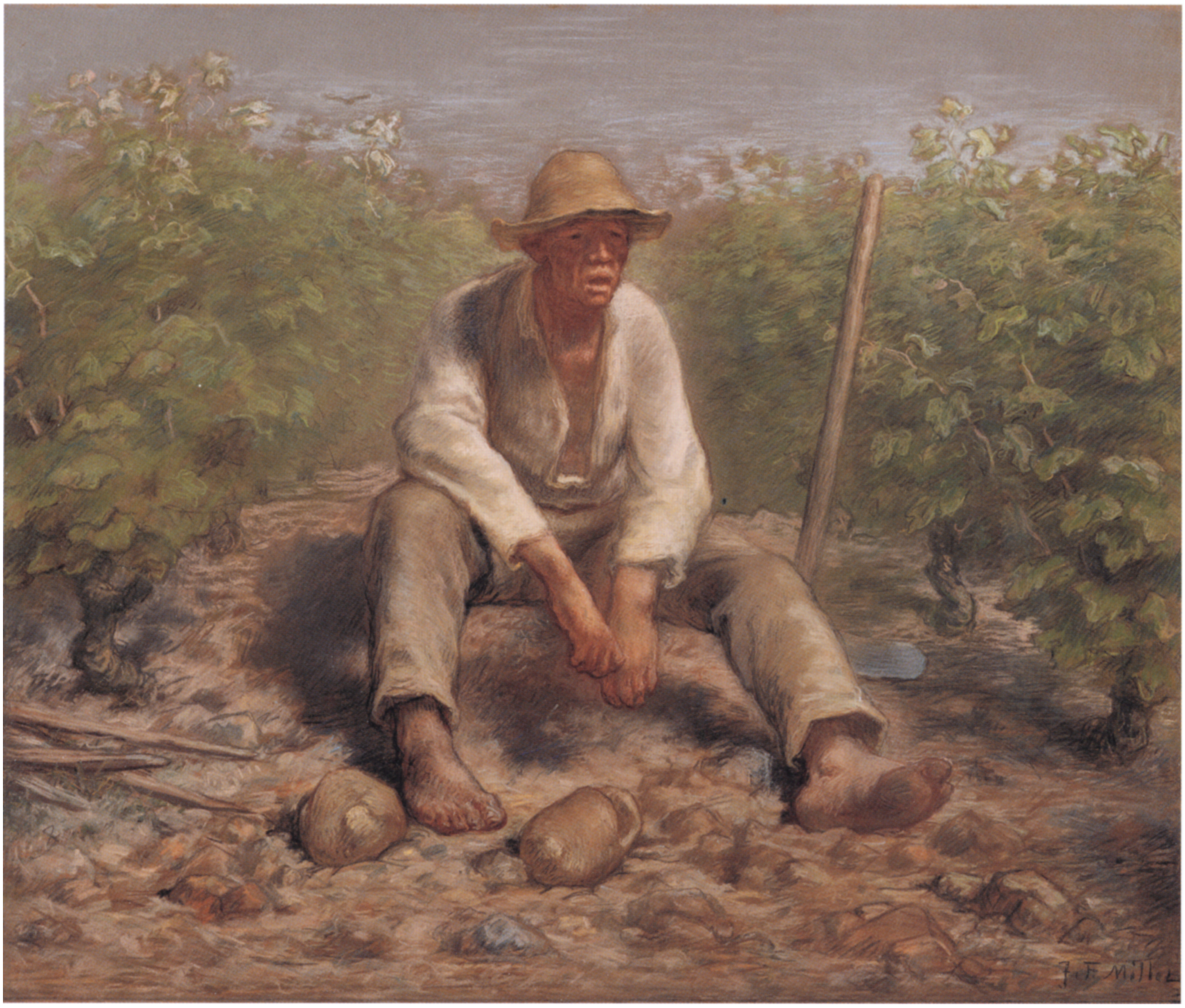
Another essay, "Sur l'art et sur les maîtres," published in 1922, further emphasized Millet's significance to Bernard. He wrote, "Millet is a master. [...] he possesses the rare beauty of nuances of feeling and values of soul."[49] By this point Bernard had abandoned his earlier avant-garde aesthetic and had begun to focus nearly exclusively on classicized religious imagery, and his article very much bought into the stereotype of Millet's own religiosity being expressed through his humble peasants, as seen in particular in *The Angelus*. Yet still Bernard pointed to Millet's ability to convey universal truths through his drawing, in his use of lines and the purity of his color, qualities he and other Post-Impressionists had long admired.[50]

During his years at Pont-Aven, Bernard adopted style and imagery strongly associated with Millet into his paintings. Like Gauguin, Bernard's works of 1886 maintained a strong impressionistic style, with loose brushstrokes and naturalistic renderings of color and light. Yet in the following years and subsequent trips to Brittany, Bernard's style grew radically different, focusing on flat expanses of color, compressed space, and simplified forms delineated with heavy black outlines. Turning several times to the theme of harvesters and gleaners, as in *The Harvest* (109), for example, Bernard illustrated simplified peasant figures laboring in fields made up of dramatic swathes of pure color, drawing parallels between this primitive style of painting and their traditional way of life.[51] Though radical in their compositions, these harvest scenes also harked back to Millet's earlier works, particularly in the forms of the bending gleaning figures. Bernard's reduction of the figures to curving lines and masses of color also helped transform them into decorative silhouettes similar to those he so admired in Millet's work.

Both Gauguin and Bernard continued to focus on the theme of the peasant in 1889, the year of the Exposition Universelle, when they and other members of the Pont-Aven School showed their work together for the first time as the Groupe Impressionniste et Synthétiste at the Café des Arts, on the exhibition grounds.



105
Paul Gauguin
The Wine Harvest (Human Misery), 1888
Oil on jute sackcloth, 73.5 × 92 cm
Ordrupgaard, Copenhagen

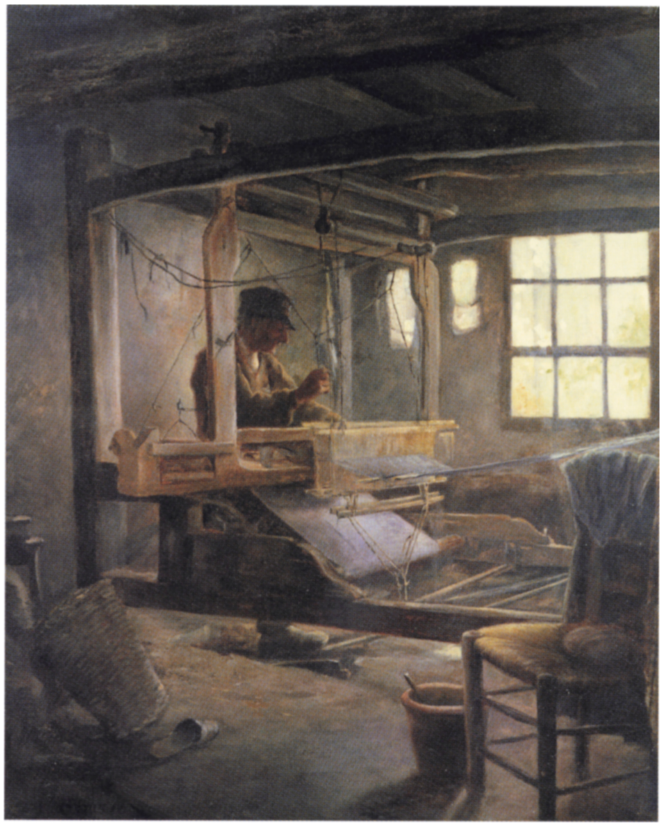


106
Jean-François Millet
Vineyard Laborer Resting, 1869
Pastel and black chalk on paper,
70.5 × 84 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

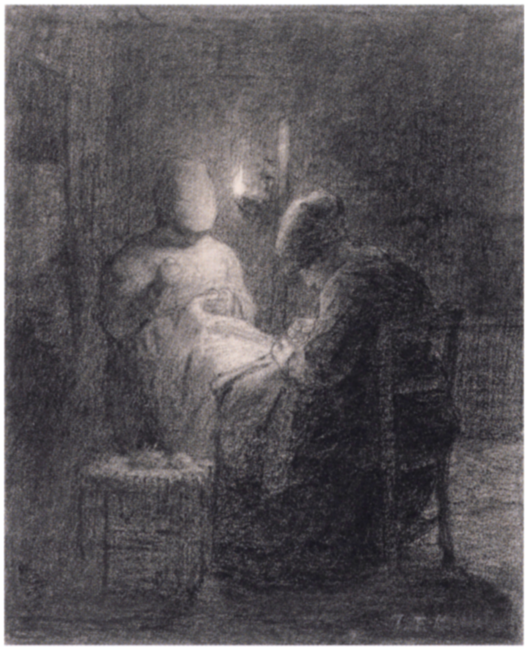
Both Gauguin's *Wine Harvest (Human Misery)* and Bernard's *The Harvest* were included in the so-called Volpini Exhibition, along with a radical series of zincograph prints the two executed for the show.[52] These prints, too, heavily emphasized a number of the peasant themes both artists were also exploring in their contemporary paintings—themes that bore close associations to Millet's work. Although the exhibition attracted little critical attention, one Dutch writer commented on the highly abstract works in the show and wondered "whether such work will in time replace the art of the Millets and the Corots."[53]

Unlike Gauguin and Bernard, Paul Sérusier generally spoke only vaguely about his artistic influences, though he drew inspiration from a wide variety of periods, styles, and genres, often adopting motifs from other artists in highly stylized and personalized ways.[54] Likewise, his own aesthetic theory, *ABC de la peinture*, which he published in 1921, emphasized the importance of observation of the natural world through one's own subjective vision. To Sérusier, this method of painting, combined with the harmonious rendering of line and color, was the future of true art. To some extent this description closely paralleled the contemporary readings of Millet's oeuvre.[55]

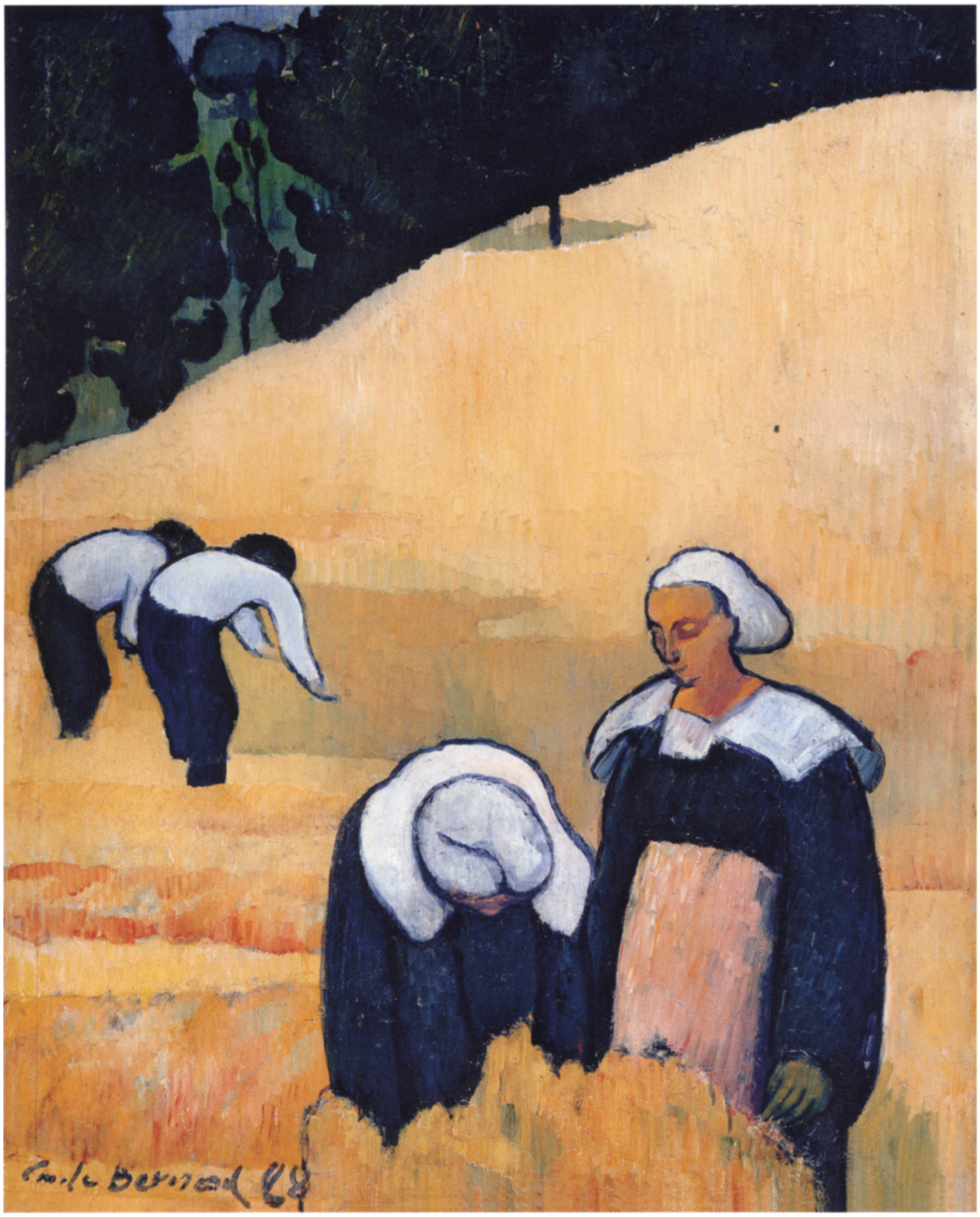
The profundity of Gauguin's influence—and, though to a lesser extent, that of Bernard—on Sérusier at Pont-Aven suggests that he may have experienced Millet's impact through the filter of these other artists. However, his time at the Académie Julian in the mid-1880s indicates a realist tendency in his early works that was akin to Millet. One of his earliest extant paintings, *The Breton Weaver* (107), illustrates the (by then) popular image of a peasant weaving in a workshop. The earthy tones, strong contrasts of light and shadow, and quasi-realistic rendering of the figure and space compare to the darkened interiors and working figures of Millet's paintings and drawings, such as *The Vigil* (108). This painting was shown at the Salon of 1888—in the midst of the resurgence in popularity of Millet—where it received honorable mention. Notably, this painting came just months before Sérusier's momentous encounter with Gauguin, when he painted the bold, abstract *Talisman* (1888, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) at Pont-Aven.



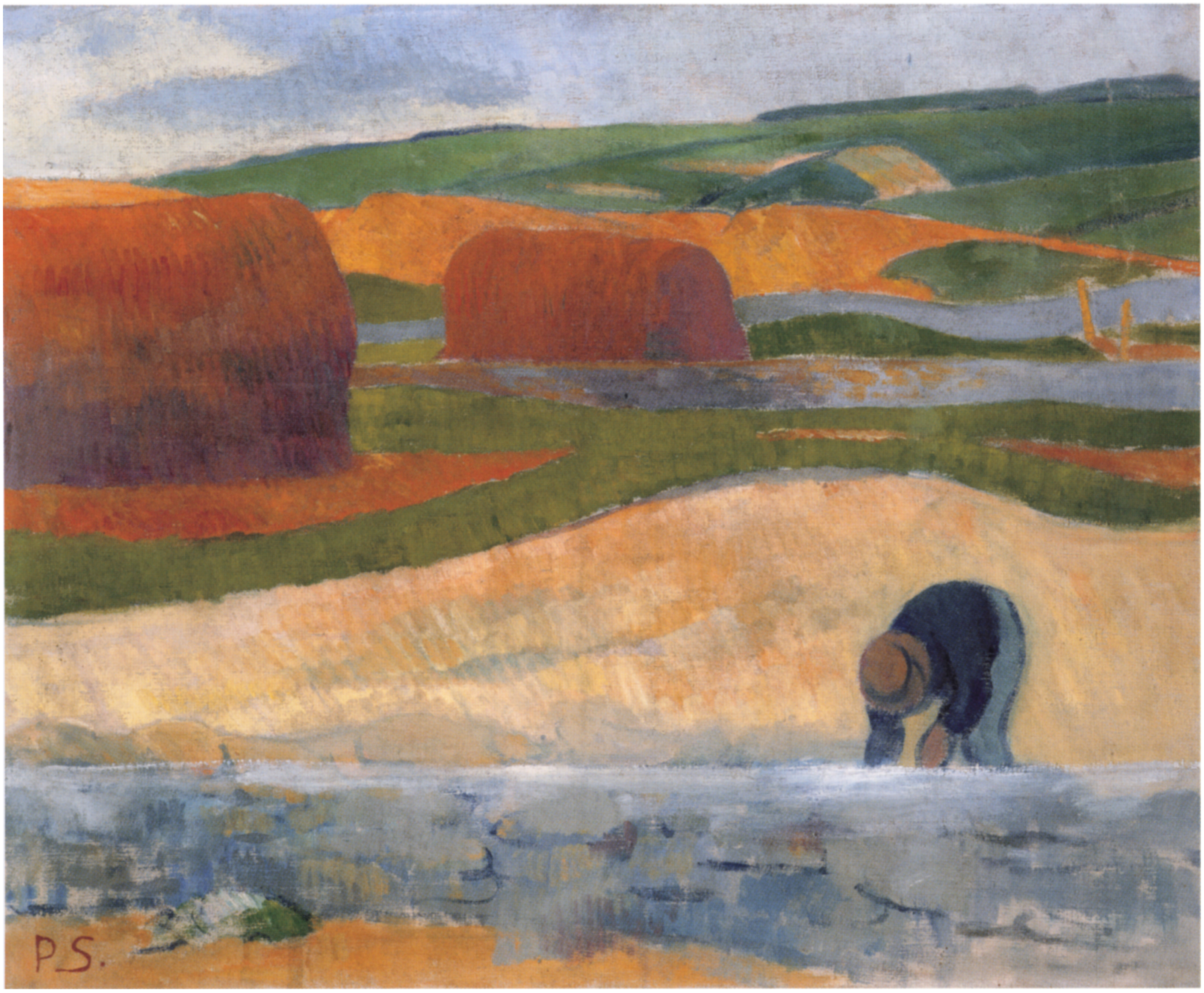
107
Paul Sérusier
The Breton Weaver, 1888
Oil on canvas, 72 × 59 cm
Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, Senlis



108
Jean-François Millet
The Vigil (*Women Sewing*), c. 1853
Conté crayon on paper, 32.7 × 26.5 cm
Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts


Emile Bernard 88

109
Emile Bernard
The Harvest, 1888
Oil on canvas, 56.4 × 45.1 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



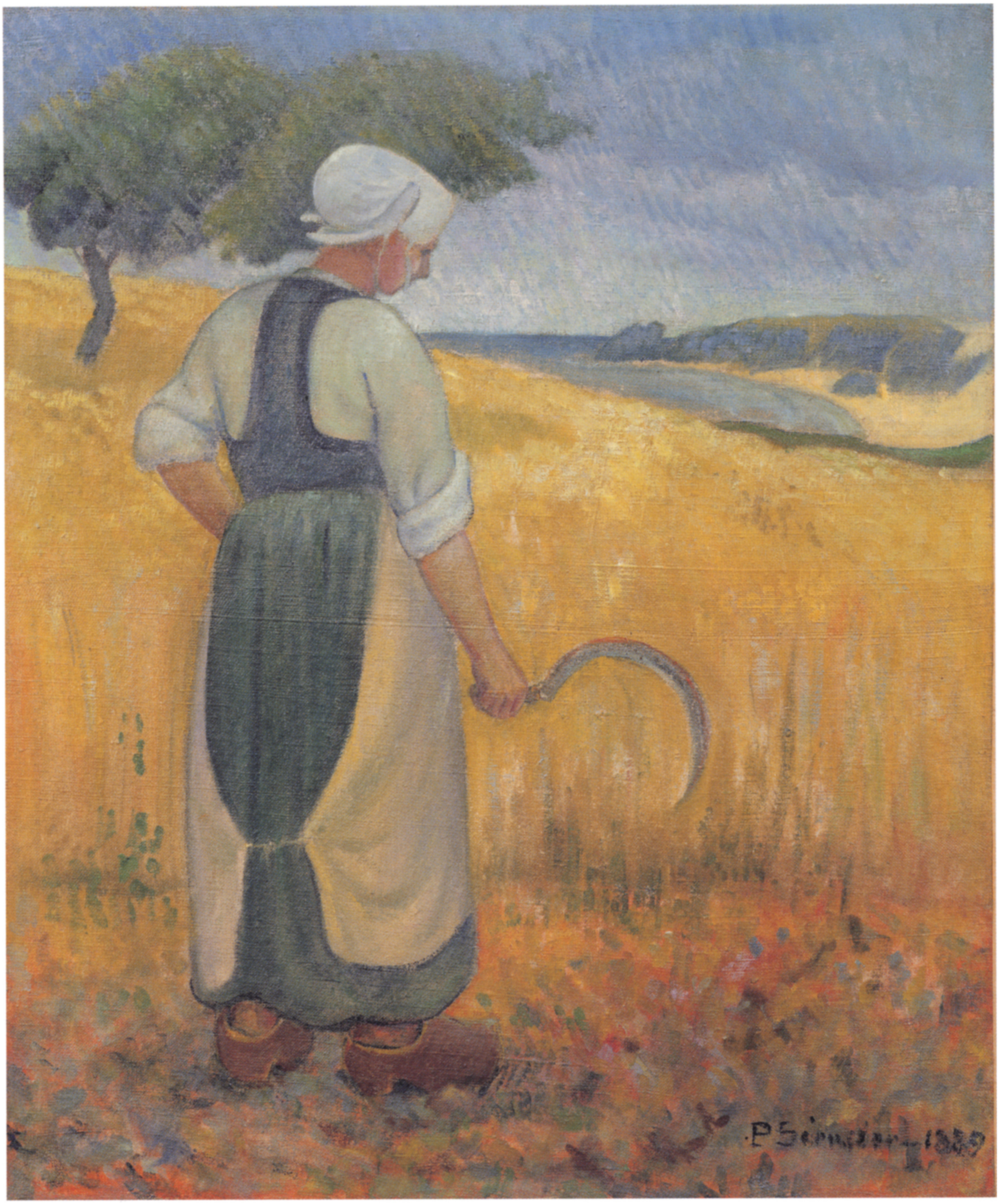
110
Paul Sérusier
The Seaweed Gatherer, c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 46 × 55 cm
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Newfields
(Samuel Josefowitz Collection of
the School of Pont-Aven, through
the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc.,
the Josefowitz Family, Mr. and Mrs. James
M. Cornelius, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J.
Betley, Lori and Dan Efroymson, and other
Friends of the Museum)

Sérusier's works, particularly from his early years in Brittany from 1888 to 1892, also suggest Millet's influence. Sérusier adopted themes and motifs so closely associated with Millet that they would have been nearly impossible not to recognize. His *Seaweed Gatherer* (110), painted in the coastal village of Le Pouldu, presents the familiar image of a local peasant bending over to pick bits of seaweed from the beach while reddish mounds of seaweed or wheat have already been gathered behind him.[56] The man's posture coupled with the stacks of seaweed bring to mind obvious associations with Millet's *Gleaners*, particularly as it seems Sérusier's peasant is gathering the last remnants of the harvest. Similarly, his *Breton Girl with a Sickle* (111) references Millet's *Mower* (40). In both compositions the monumental figure is viewed from behind, overlooking a vast field to be harvested.

Sérusier utilized Millet-like imagery as part of his own explorations of a new aesthetic. In both *The Seaweed Gatherer* and *Breton Girl*, the figures and landscapes are reduced and simplified, and the space is compressed, but the composition maintains its structure through the horizontal bands of color making up the background. Thus, the images are highly composed, illustrating Sérusier's adoption of the Synthetist aesthetic promoted by his contemporaries Gauguin and Bernard and which traced back to Millet. Further, despite the vivid colors of the landscape, the solitary working peasants convey a sense of isolation similar to Millet's late landscapes as well.

Millet's Lasting Impact

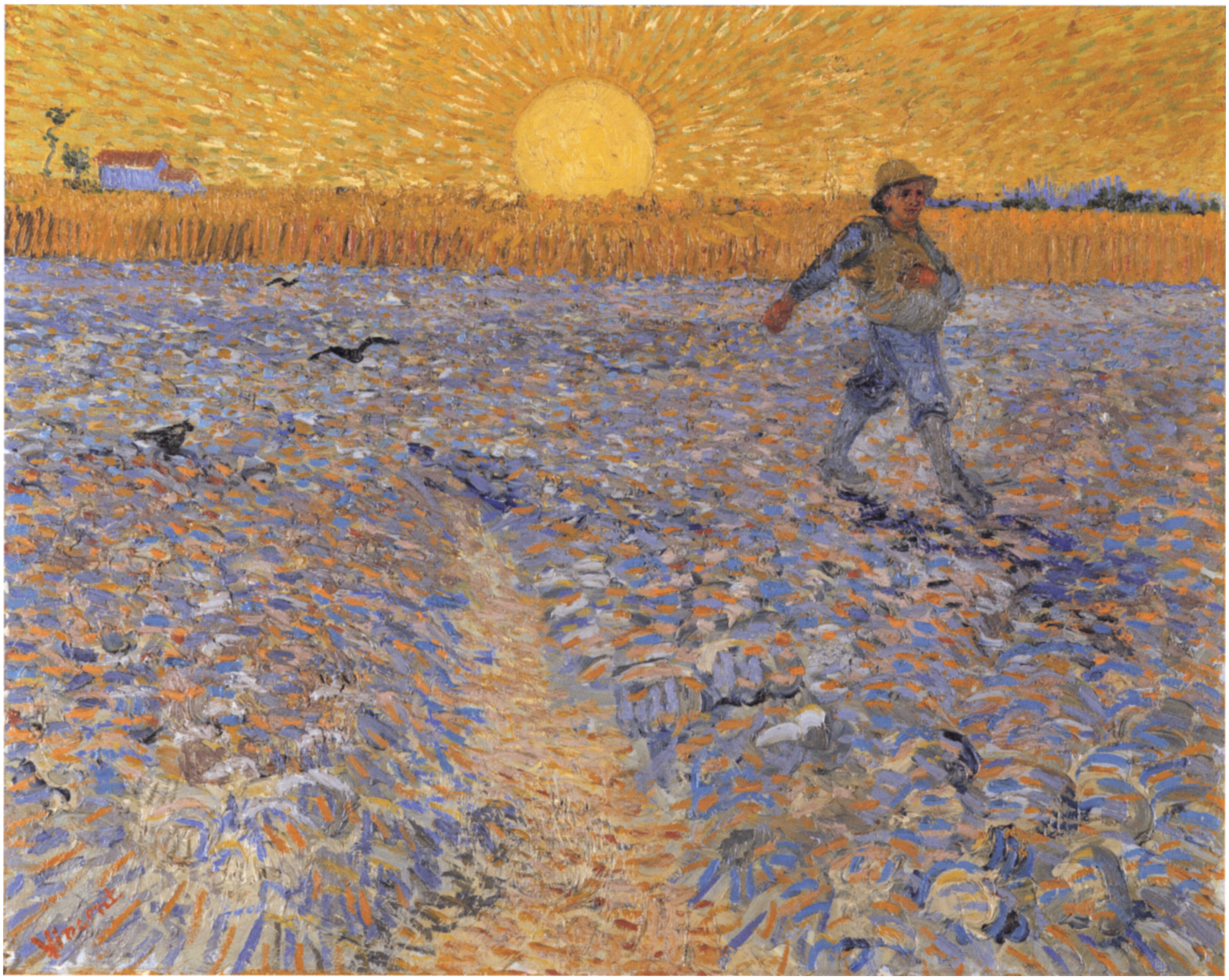
Millet's influence on modern art is subtle but profound. From the mid-nineteenth century on, he was recognized by liberal and conservative critics alike as a modernizing force in French painting, for better or worse. His role as a synthesizing artist who distilled his images down to essential components and created a unified overall vision was sometimes overlooked in terms of its influence on the avant-garde in favor of his contemporaries, such as the radical Courbet and poetic Corot. Yet Millet's penchant for abbreviation and simplification paved the way for the emergence of some of the most abstract art of the era, inspiring the works of a diverse range of Post-Impressionist artists. His brand of idealized naturalism, simplified forms, and peasant motifs significantly impacted their work. While these later artists worked in styles that seem vastly different from his, all were acutely aware of Millet's imagery and its cultural importance as part of the development of a new modernist aesthetic.


P Sérusier 1889

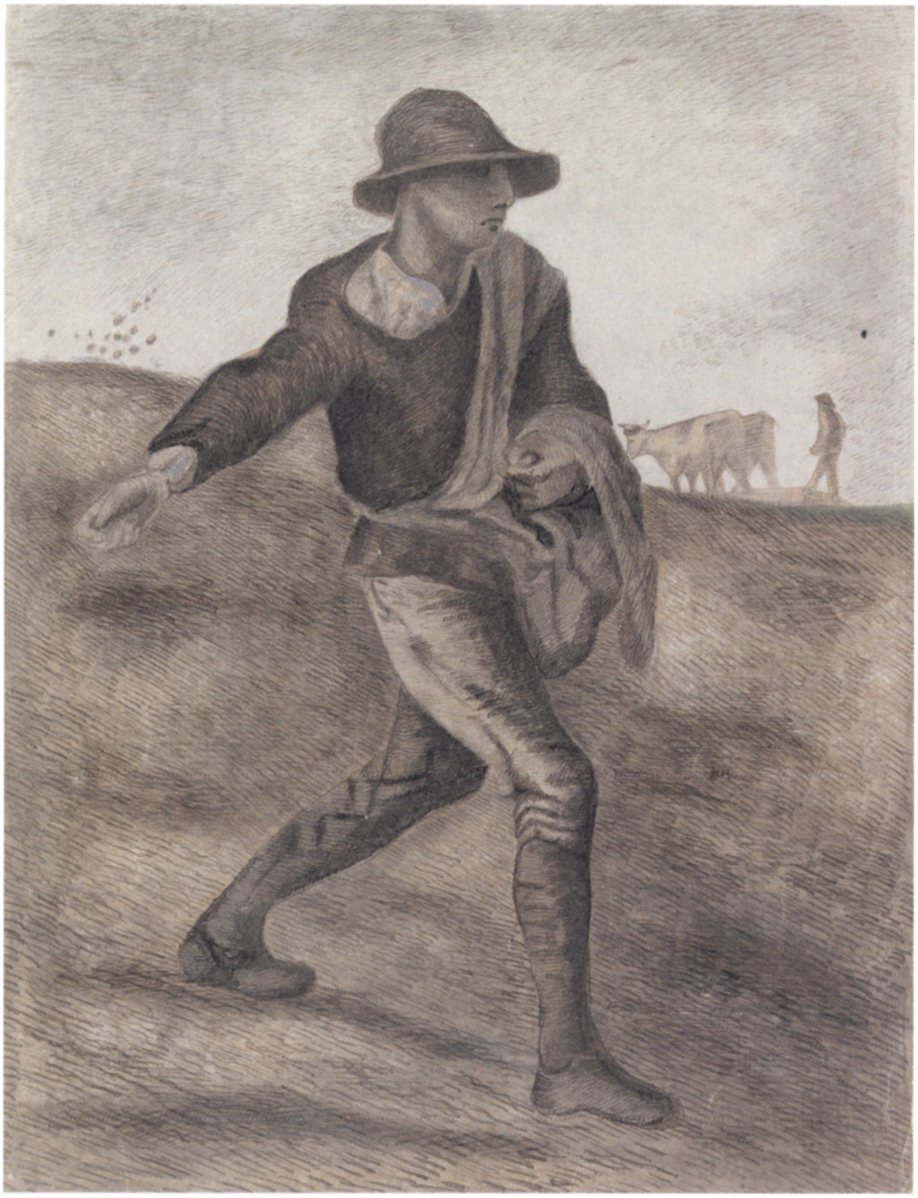
111
Paul Sérusier
Breton Girl with a Sickle, 1889
Oil on canvas, 46.1 × 38.4 cm
Private collection

Van Gogh and “Père Millet”

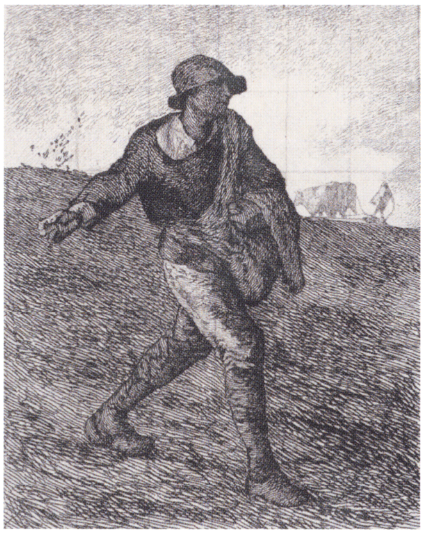
Nienke Bakker



112
Vincent van Gogh
The Sower, 1888
Oil on canvas, 64.2 × 80.3 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



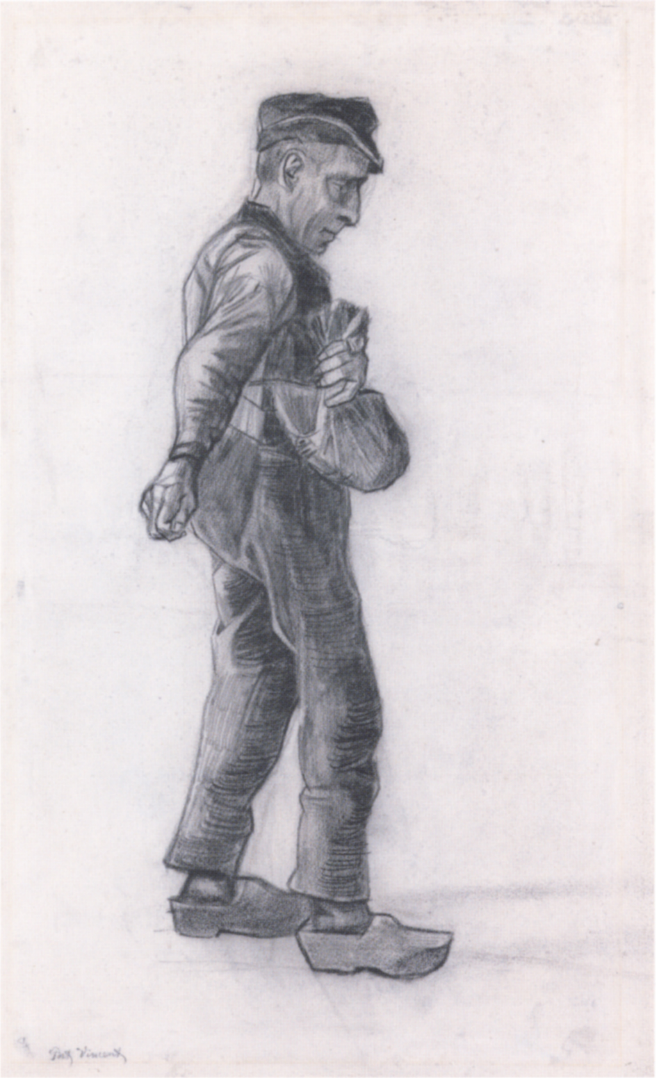
113
Vincent van Gogh
The Sower (after Millet), 1881
Pen and brush and ink and watercolor
on paper, 48.1 × 36.7 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



114
Paul-Edme Le Rat
The Sower (after Millet), 1873
Etching and pencil on paper, 44.9 × 31.2 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Probably no artist ever reflected as deeply or as personally on the importance of Jean-François Millet as did Vincent van Gogh. His letters express a boundless admiration for the French master, and his own work, from his earliest drawings to his late paintings, was profoundly influenced by Millet's. Van Gogh's appreciation was not limited to his predecessor's artistic achievements, either: he also admired the Frenchman's attitude to life, particularly while he himself was attempting to find his way as an artist. He recognized a kindred spirit in the "peasant painter," whose example helped validate his own artistic and personal choices. "Millet is—PÈRE *Millet*, that is, counsellor and guide in *everything*, for the younger painters," he declared in April 1885 while working on *The Potato Eaters*, the painting that was to mark the culmination of his training.[1]

Van Gogh continued to admire the earlier generation of French painters—Millet above all—even after embracing more modern movements in Paris such as Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism. During his time in Arles he attempted to "modernize" Millet's iconic painting *The Sower* from 1850, adding more color to the motif and flattening the forms in the manner of a Japanese print. And in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence he painted a series of twenty "translations into color" after black-and-white reproductions of works by Millet, many of which he had already copied at the beginning of his artistic career. During this final period of Van Gogh's life, as he battled with mental illness and began to doubt his artistic abilities, Millet had become an example who above all offered him consolation: "what a master Millet is. That fellow, so wise, so moved, does the countryside in such a way that even in town one continues to feel it. And then he has something unique and so good right down to his depths that it consoles one to look at his works, and one wonders if he did them this way expressly to console us."[2]



115
Vincent van Gogh
Sower, 1881
Black chalk on paper, 55.9 × 33.2 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Early Appreciation

Van Gogh's love of Millet's work arose long before he himself decided to become an artist. Born in 1853 and raised as a pastor's son in rural Brabant, he was taken on at the age of sixteen as the youngest clerk at the international art firm Goupil & Cie. Between 1869 and 1876 he worked successively at the company's branches in The Hague, London, and Paris. He reported in his letters to his brother Theo on the museums, exhibitions, and galleries he visited in this period, which is when the foundations were laid of his extensive knowledge of art and artists. His early tastes were set by the established art he saw in the museums and at Goupil: seventeenth-century Dutch masters, Salon painting, realism, and the painters of the Barbizon and Hague schools.

As early as 1874, Van Gogh included Millet in a list of "painters whom I like very much indeed." Of the celebrated *Angelus*, which he knew solely from reproductions, he wrote, "that's rich, that's poetry," while *The Church at Gréville* in the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris lingered long in his memory.[3] Seeing Millet's work at the exhibition preceding the auction of the Emile Gavet collection in June 1875 also made a profound impression on him. The ninety-five pastels and drawings on show offered a magnificent survey that prompted an emotional Van Gogh to reach for a Bible quotation: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."[4] The exhibition was a significant event in the Parisian art world and together with the auction of Millet's estate following his death that January represented the fullest survey of his oeuvre to date.[5]

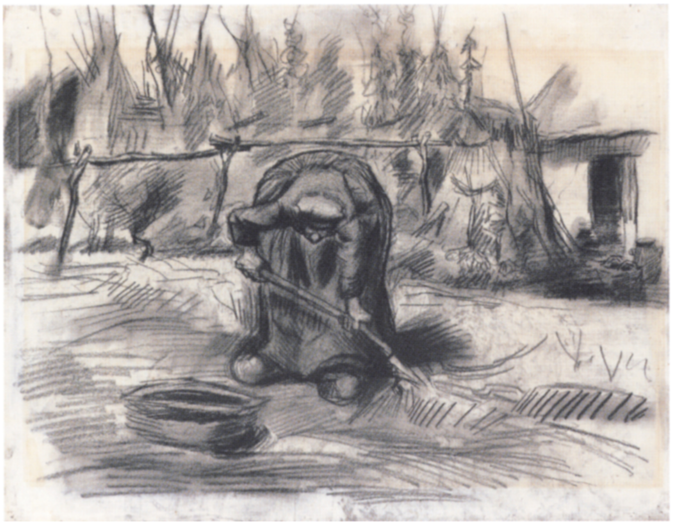
Van Gogh's interest in art was outweighed at this point by his preoccupation with religion, and his early appreciation of Millet's work ought to be viewed in a similar light. The French artist's poetic representations of peasant life appealed to Van Gogh's penchant for nature and the countryside, but they now assumed an additional spiritual significance for him. He hung the print series *The Four Times of the Day* in his room, and shortly before leaving Paris in March 1876 he bought copies of an etching after *The Angelus* for himself and Theo. Meanwhile, his growing obsession with religion was accompanied by the neglect of his work, resulting in his dismissal from Goupil. After trying his luck as a teacher and assistant preacher in England, as a bookseller in Dordrecht, a would-be student of theology in Amsterdam, and a Protestant missionary in the Borinage region of Belgium, a deeply disillusioned and thoroughly stymied Van Gogh accepted Theo's advice in 1880 to embark on a career as an artist.

Having found his vocation, Van Gogh threw himself into drawing copies of the examples he found in textbooks and in prints after famous artists, especially Millet: "I'm trying to study this master seriously," he wrote that year.[6] He made repeated copies of *The Sower*, *The Diggers*, and the ten scenes making up *The Labors of the Fields*, as well as *The Angelus* and *The Four Times of the Day*, with a view to learning the basic principles of drawing and practicing the representation of the peasant figure which, thanks to Millet, had become such an important genre in art. Only a few of Van Gogh's early drawn copies after Millet have survived: *The Angelus* and *The Diggers* from 1880 and *The Sower* from 1881 (113).[7] The latter drawing—done in pen and ink in a relatively large format—,was the first in a long series of works that Van Gogh devoted to the theme of the sower, taking as his example Paul-Edme Le Rat's etching after Millet's painting (114), published in 1873 by the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel. Not only did Van Gogh copy motifs from Millet verbatim, he was also clearly indebted to the French artist for the poses of his figures. This was the case in his early drawings, made while he was still searching for a visual language of his own (115), but also with the figures he drew digging, gleaning, and binding sheaves in 1885, many of which can be traced directly to works by Millet like *The Labors of the Fields* and *The Gleaners* (116, 117, 118, 119).[8]

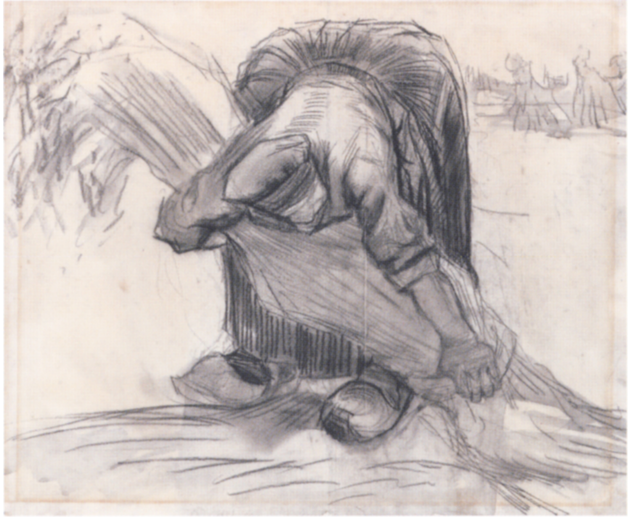
Millet as Role Model

Following his death, Millet developed into a mythical figure in France and an example for academic artists and the avant-garde alike.[9] The publication of Alfred Sensier's *La vie et l'oeuvre de J.-F. Millet* in 1881 did much to establish the image of the painter as a simple, deeply religious man who lived in close communion with the countryside and its people.[10] Sensier was not only Millet's patron but a close friend, too, and he quoted letters in his biography that the artist had sent him. Romanticized though it was, Sensier's biography offered for the first time a detailed and highly personal picture of Millet's life and beliefs. Millet was also a highly respected example in artists' circles in The Hague, where Van Gogh went to live at the end of 1881. The celebrated Hague School painter Jozef Israëls, for instance, was frequently referred to as the "Dutch Millet." The artist Théophile de Bock, who according to Van Gogh idolized Millet, lent him Sensier's biography in March 1882. Van Gogh was so fascinated by Millet's life story that, as he told his brother Theo, he woke himself up in the middle of the night to continue reading.[11] Sensier sketched an image of the kind of artist Van Gogh wanted to be: "Millet had a suffering and melancholy nature, but he was first of all a man of strong convictions. Faithful and proud in his religion and his art, to these he sacrificed pleasure, repose, and even his life, which was shortened by his struggles. [...] his life must be reckoned that of a sage, a courageous worker, a loving father, and a devoted comrade."[12] From that moment on, "Père Millet" became a role model for Van Gogh, helping him to justify his own attitudes and choices. There were plenty of parallels between the two artists' lives: Millet too had grown up in the country and had become an artist relatively late. He struggled to get his work accepted and was supported financially by Sensier, just as Vincent was by Theo.[13]

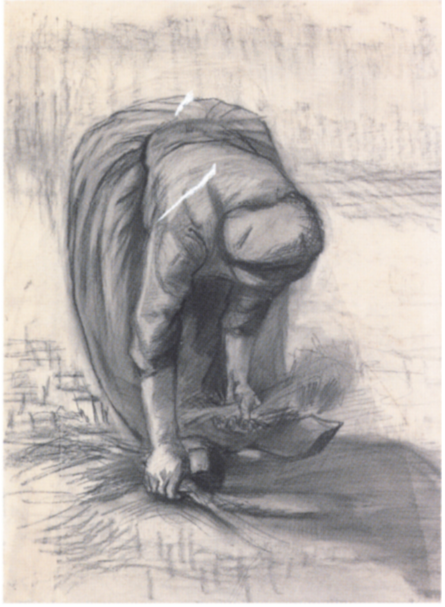
The image Van Gogh held of Millet was not entirely accurate: Sensier exaggerated certain



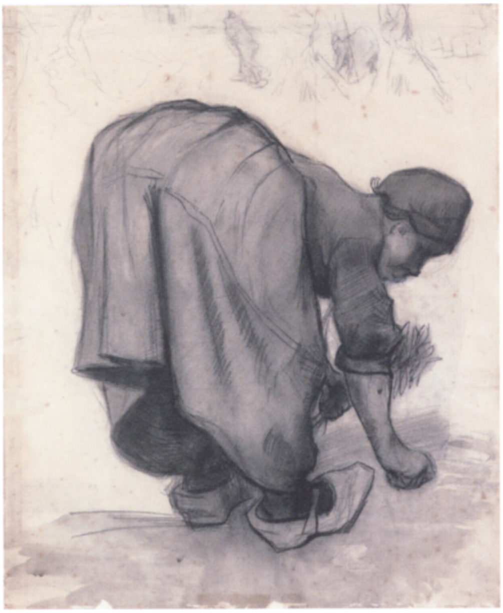
116
Vincent van Gogh
Peasant Woman Digging, 1885
Black chalk on paper, 44.2 × 55.6 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



117
Vincent van Gogh
Peasant Woman Binding Wheat Sheaves, 1885
Black chalk on paper, 44.4 × 52.6 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



118
Vincent van Gogh
Peasant Woman Gleaning, 1885
Black chalk on paper, 52.5 × 37.9 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



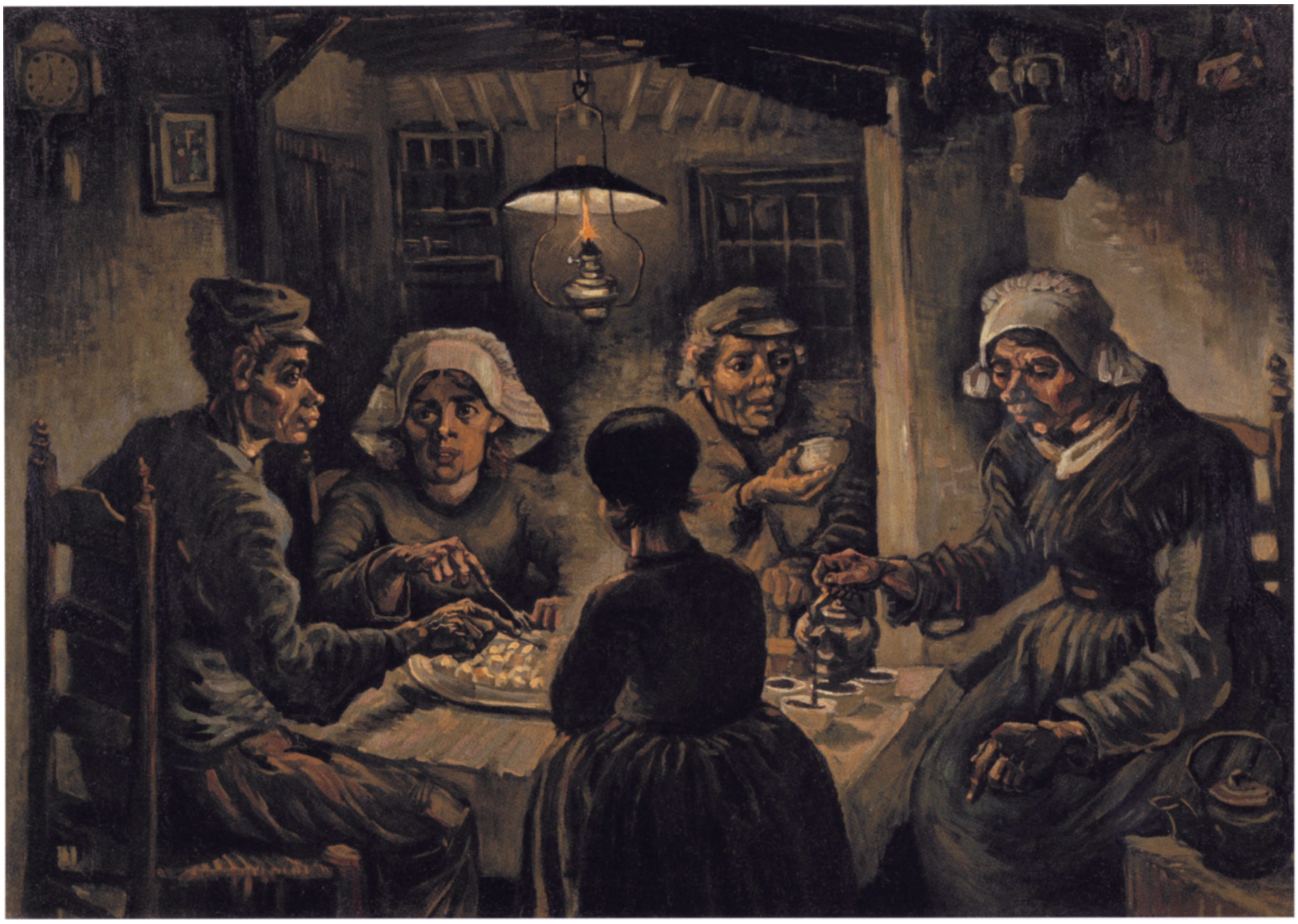
119
Vincent van Gogh
Peasant Woman Gleaning, 1885
Black chalk and gouache on paper,
52.2 × 43.2 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

elements, such as Millet's simple peasant existence and deep faith, while playing down others, such as the social critique implied by his work. There was a great deal of projection on Van Gogh's part, too: he took what he needed from Millet's life story to vindicate his own ideals and convictions. Time and again in his letters he approvingly quotes the phrase "dans l'art il faut y mettre sa peau" (in art one must give heart and soul) as well as other adages of the master with which he felt he could identify. To paint peasants, you had to live like they did: "That's what Millet did—and—*didn't want anything else anyway.*"[14] Above all, artists should take no notice of what art dealers and critics thought, but rather be true to themselves at all times. Van Gogh not only detected his own, religiously rooted work ethic in the French artist ("My program is work. 'Thou shalt gain thy bread in the sweat of thy brow'"[15]), but also his pantheistic beliefs, which he called the "'something on high' [*quelque chose là-haut*] in which Millet believed, namely in the existence of a God and an eternity."[16] This religious sense of nature was expressed in the recurring cycle of the seasons and the associated labors of the land. Like Millet, Van Gogh wanted to depict the raw beauty of humble peasant life and the deep connection between human beings and nature that persisted in the countryside.

Peasant Painter

Having focused on drawing in the early years of his artistic practice, Van Gogh shifted his attention from the summer of 1883 to painting landscapes, with the aim of capturing nature's atmosphere and "sentiment," as the Barbizon and Hague school painters had done so brilliantly. He also made his first attempts in this period to produce a large piece with laboring figures in the spirit of Millet. In studies of potato grubbers, of which only a single painted sketch remains, he pursued "a certain mood of devotion"—the quality he so admired in Millet, as in *The Gleaners*, which Sensier described as a religious painting.[17] Persuading himself that he needed to seek refuge in the unspoiled countryside like Millet and the other Barbizon painters had done, Van Gogh left The Hague and spent a brief time in the isolated northern province of Drenthe, before returning to Brabant, the region where he had grown up.

The rural environment of Nuenen, the village where his parents lived, was exactly what Van Gogh needed to fulfill his ambitions as a painter of peasant life. In the two years he spent there he painted and drew countless landscapes, farmers working the land, weavers at their looms, and peasant heads, culminating in *The Potato Eaters* (120). This was the most ambitious work from his Dutch period: Van Gogh's first full-fledged figure piece and the painting with which he aimed to present himself as a peasant painter. Aside from a few Millet-inspired scenes of peasant life with figures at work, he had no experience whatsoever in the painting of large pieces with multiple figures.[18] He also set the bar very high for himself in terms of the chiaroscuro and the handling of color, with the result that painting the scene turned out to be "a formidable fight."[19] The criticism of *The Potato Eaters* that he received from Theo and others related not only to the dark colors but, above all, to the composition and the anatomy of the figures. His artist friend Anthon van Rappard was merciless: "You can do better than this—fortunately; but why, then, observe and treat everything so superficially? Why not study the movements? Now they're posing. […] And with such a manner of working you dare to invoke the names of Millet and Breton?"[20] Van Gogh was deeply offended: what mattered to him was not the painting's technique but its message. He had set out—entirely in keeping with Millet—to express an essential truth about peasant life in the image of the coarse rural laborer who earned his bread through hard toil. Bearing in mind Théophile Gautier's comment, quoted in Sensier's book, that Millet's *Sower* seemed painted with the very soil he sowed, Van Gogh went so far as to overpaint the heads of his potato eaters in "*something like the color of a really dusty potato, unpeeled of course.*"[21] He rejected criticism of the mistakes in his painting, claiming that modern art needed something other than academic correctness, which was not something Millet, Léon Augustin Lhermitte, or Jules Breton had pursued either.



120
Vincent van Gogh
The Potato Eaters, 1885
Oil on canvas, 82 × 114 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Colorless Millet

Van Gogh was utterly convinced in his Dutch years that the peasant figure, "with Millet in the van as the eternal master," was and would remain "the very heart of modern art," even though Manet and the Impressionists had taken a new direction.[22] It seems remarkable that Van Gogh should have adopted as his great example an artist by whom he had actually viewed very few paintings in person. He had not seen any more Millets since the Gavet auction and his visits to the Musée du Luxembourg in 1875: his knowledge of the Frenchman's oeuvre was based primarily on reproductions, of which he had collected many in the meantime, and on Sensier's book, which was copiously illustrated. Since Van Gogh was chiefly interested in the message conveyed by Millet's work, and less so in its style of painting or facture, this did not form a hindrance. His ideas regarding Millet's use of color seem largely to have been influenced by Gautier's comment about the earth 'tones' of *The Sower*, as Millet's palette was generally less dark than that. The only painting Van Gogh knew well in its original form—*The Church at Gréville* in the Musée du Luxembourg—was actually a bright, colorful work (48). All the same, the idea of the "colorless" Millet held sway in Van Gogh's mind during his Dutch period, which was dominated by the tonal palette of the Hague School painters. As he himself later commented: "in those days I was enthusiastic about grey, or rather, absence of colour. I was always dreaming about Millet, and then I had acquaintances in Holland in the category of painters like [Anton] Mauve, [Jozef] Israëls."[23]

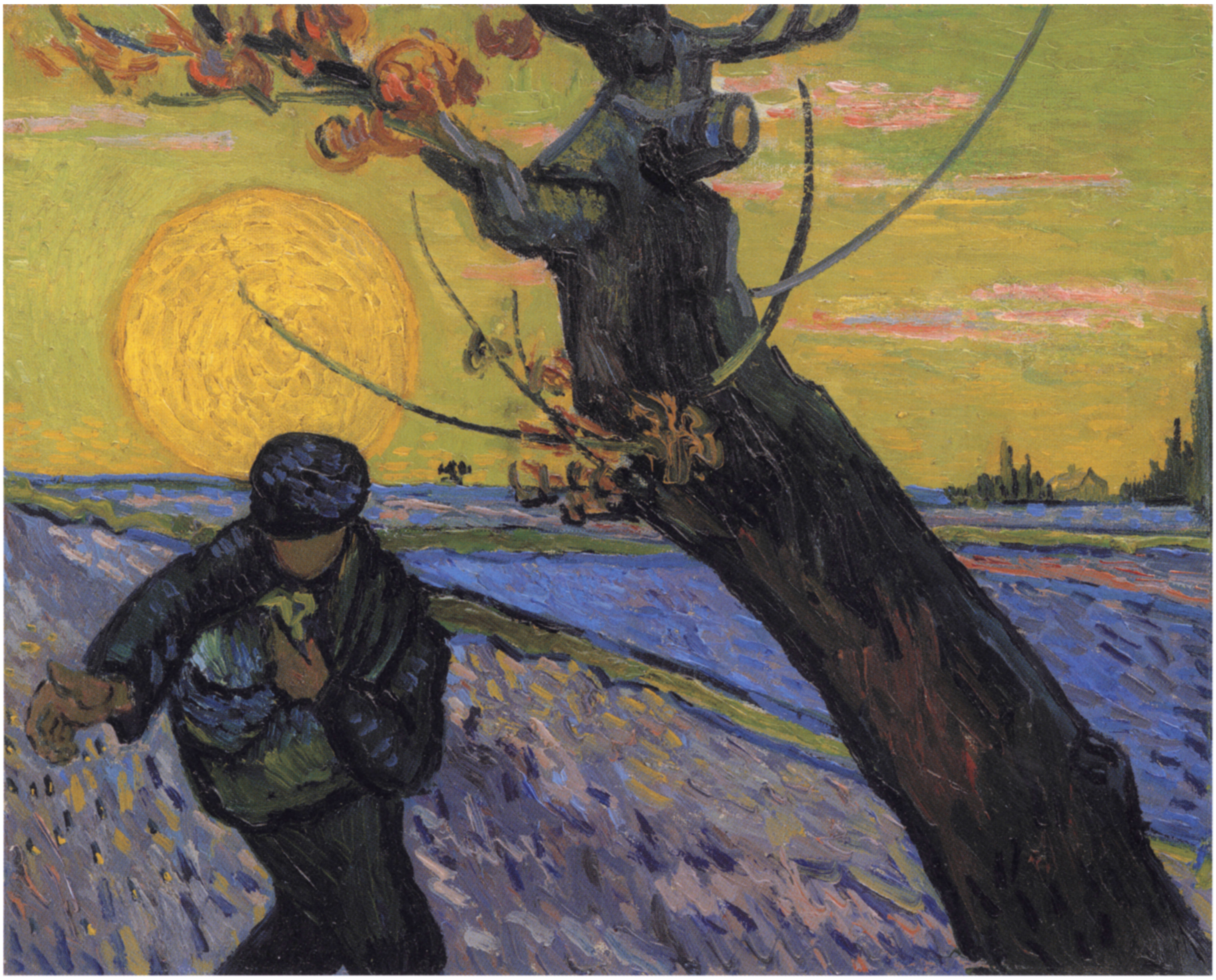
Even after arriving in Paris in 1886, Van Gogh had little opportunity at first to study Millet's work more closely. Many of the paintings had already been sold to collectors in the United States during the painter's own lifetime. The Musée du Luxembourg had only two at that point (*The Church at Gréville* (48) and *Two Bathers* (64)), although *Spring* (150) was subsequently donated in 1887. That year also saw the major respective at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which gave not just Van Gogh but an entire younger generation of artists a fresh opportunity to discover the master's work. The exhibition ran to sixty-seven paintings, including famous works like *The Angelus* (3), *The Gleaners* (22), *Man with a Hoe* (26), and *Spring*, as well as a large number of pastels, drawings, and prints.[24] Van Gogh was now finally able to form a clear idea of Millet's use of color, which, according to Paul Mantz in the catalogue, was restrained and harmonious, and of his "rough manner," with its thick impasto in "endlessly superimposed layers"—a method that led in some cases to paintings that were "unfathomable enigmas."[25] It might have been the absence of bright, pronounced colors and the heavy facture that led Camille Pissarro to describe the paintings as "dated" and, along with many other avant-garde artists, to express a preference for Millet's drawings.[26] After his *Potato Eaters*, Van Gogh had decided to modernize his work and its use of color and had developed into a fervent colorist in Paris, having discovered the art of Eugène Delacroix, Adolphe Monticelli, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, and Japanese printmaking. For him too, therefore, Millet had ceased to be "that essential modern painter,"[27] although it must still have been a special experience for him to see so many of the artist's works assembled.

The Sower

Van Gogh's move to Provence in February 1888 placed him in a rural environment once again, and so it makes sense that Millet assumed a fresh relevance for him at this point. All the same, he was no longer the master who had to be emulated, but a forerunner whose work called for a modern reinterpretation. In the sun-drenched fields around Arles, Van Gogh painted a series of orchards in blossom and about ten canvases devoted to the wheat harvest—motifs that Millet and Charles-François Daubigny had immortalized as emblems of spring and summer.[28] His harvest paintings also included "a sketch of a sower," a canvas that demanded a great deal of effort from him as the stakes were so high: "For such a long time it's been my great desire to do a sower, but the desires I've had for a long time aren't always achieved. So I'm almost afraid of them. And yet, after Millet and Lhermitte what remains to be done is [...] the sower, with color and in a large format."[29]

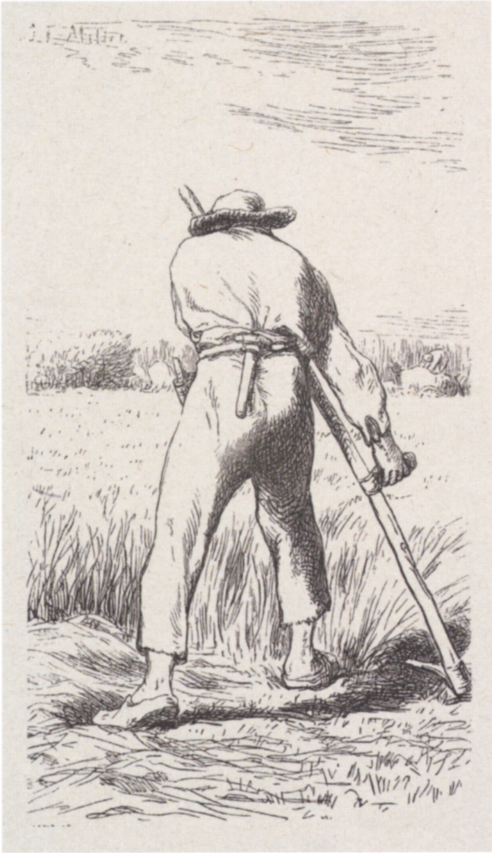
Van Gogh cannot have seen either of the two variations of Millet's celebrated *Sower* (16, 18) in person. He was familiar with the pastel of this motif in the Gavet collection, however, and the other versions in pastel shown at the 1887 exhibition, and he owned a copy of Le Rat's etching after Millet's painting (114).[30] The theme of the sower, with its biblical connotations, had always fascinated Van Gogh. Something higher revealed itself in the eternal cycle of the seasons, "that infinite of which the Sower, the sheaf, are the symbols."[31] He had drawn and painted around thirty sowers since 1880, including literal copies of Millet's such as the drawing mentioned earlier (113), studies after live models (115), and a few painted variations that have not survived. Having adopted what he perceived to be Millet's somber palette as the starting point for his earlier sowers, he now wanted to use color to modernize the iconic masterpiece. To this end he referred to his other great exemplar, Delacroix, for whom colors spoke "a symbolic language." In this way, it was possible to evoke a sense of spirituality without an explicitly biblical theme, through the use in this instance of an intense contrast between complementary yellow and violet colors (112).[32] Van Gogh was unable to achieve the result he wanted and ultimately described the study as "a failure," although he did think it had some value as an experiment with "a color suggesting some emotion, an ardent temperament."[33]

Van Gogh returned to the motif when fall came again, the season in which the fields were sowed. He began by painting two landscapes in which he depicted the sower as a small figure in the field,[34] before embarking on a more

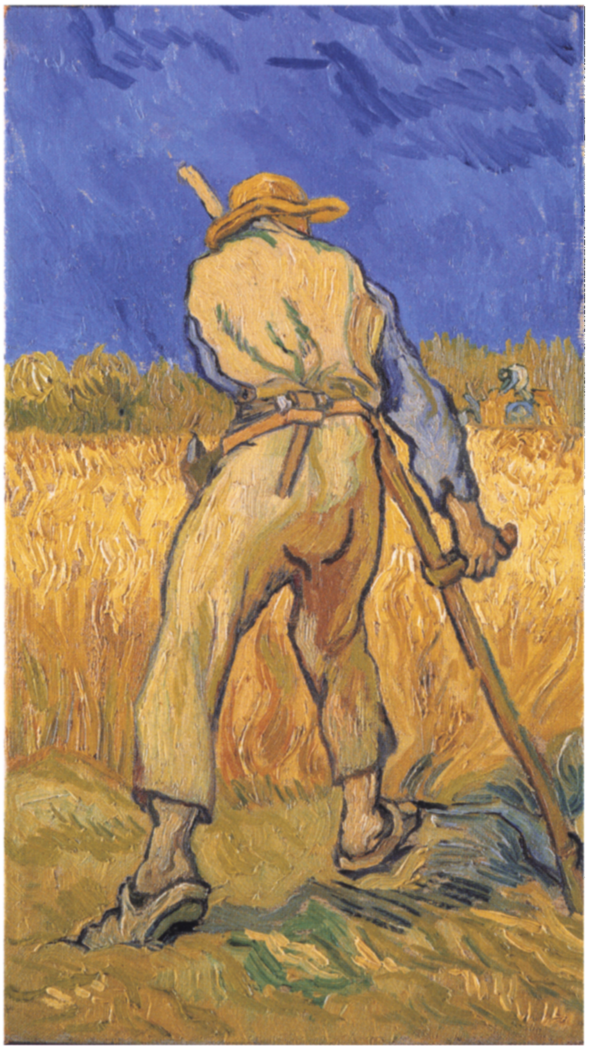


121
Vincent van Gogh
The Sower, 1888
Oil on canvas, 32.5 × 40.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

ambitious attempt to vie with Millet. There are two versions of *The Sower* dating from November 1888: a large one (Emil Bührle Collection) and a small one (121). Contrary to what was long assumed, the large painting is now thought to have been done before the smaller version.[35] Following Delacroix's example once again, Van Gogh opted for a complementary color contrast—yellow for the sky and the setting sun and violet for the land, supplemented by Prussian blue for the sower and the tree. Above all, however, it was the composition that made the work modern. Paul Gauguin had moved in with the artist in Arles by that point, and he urged Van Gogh to abstract more and to work from his imagination. Having been challenged to take his experiments with color and form even further, Van Gogh painted this powerful composition with its large expanses of color and dominated by the diagonal of the tree and the frontally rendered sower. The influence of Japanese woodblock prints that so marked his work in Arles is evident here too in the use of color and flattened perspective.[36] The setting sun wreaths the sower's head like a halo, giving him the presence of a holy figure or, to use Van Gogh's own words,



122
Jacques Adrien Lavieille
The Reaper, from the series *The Labors of the Fields* (after Millet), 1853
Wood engraving on chine collé, 13.5 × 7.5 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



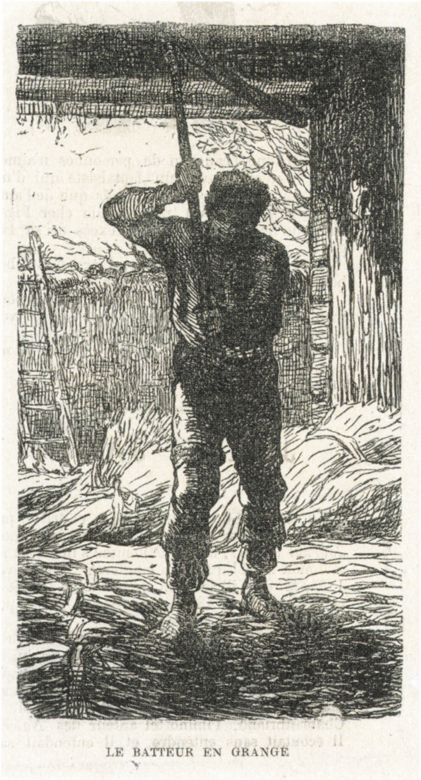
123
Vincent van Gogh
The Reaper (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 43.5 × 25 cm
Private collection, Larry Ellison

"that *je ne sais quoi* of the eternal, of which the halo used to be the symbol."[37]

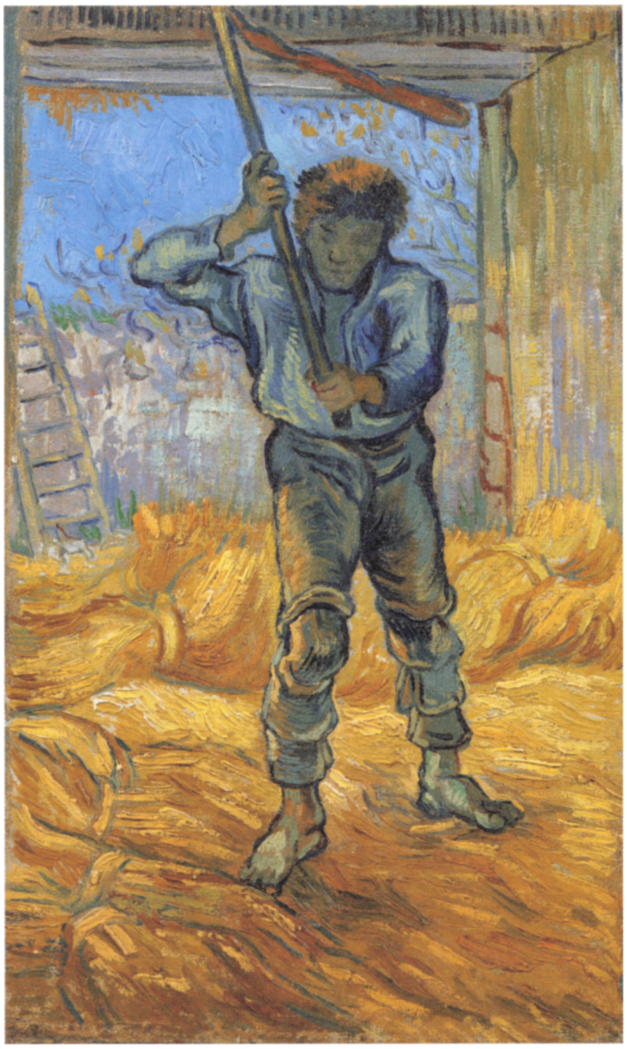
Thoré had written in respect of Millet's *Sower* that the artist was looking for "the very type of the thing, always as in the Bible or Homer. He is truly possessed of greatness, because of his simplicity."[38] In a similar vein, Van Gogh felt that art sometimes outdid nature in "*the type* distilled from many *individuals* […] as, for instance, in Millet's sower, in which there is more soul than in an ordinary sower in the field."[39] He wanted to give this idea a new form in his November sower—the last time he sought to equal Millet's masterpiece. Thereafter, the mental illness that manifested itself at the end of December 1888 meant he no longer dared to challenge himself in such a way, although he did paint two copies after the print of *The Sower* while in Saint-Rémy.[40]

Translating into Color

Van Gogh spent his second year in southern France at a clinic for the mentally ill in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, to which he had himself voluntarily admitted at the beginning of May 1889. After a major breakdown that lasted for about six weeks in the summer, he was obliged to work indoors. To get back into the swing of painting, he began by copying prints. In the fall and winter of 1889–90, he painted twenty-eight copies in total, no fewer than twenty of them after Millet.[41] It was more or less by chance



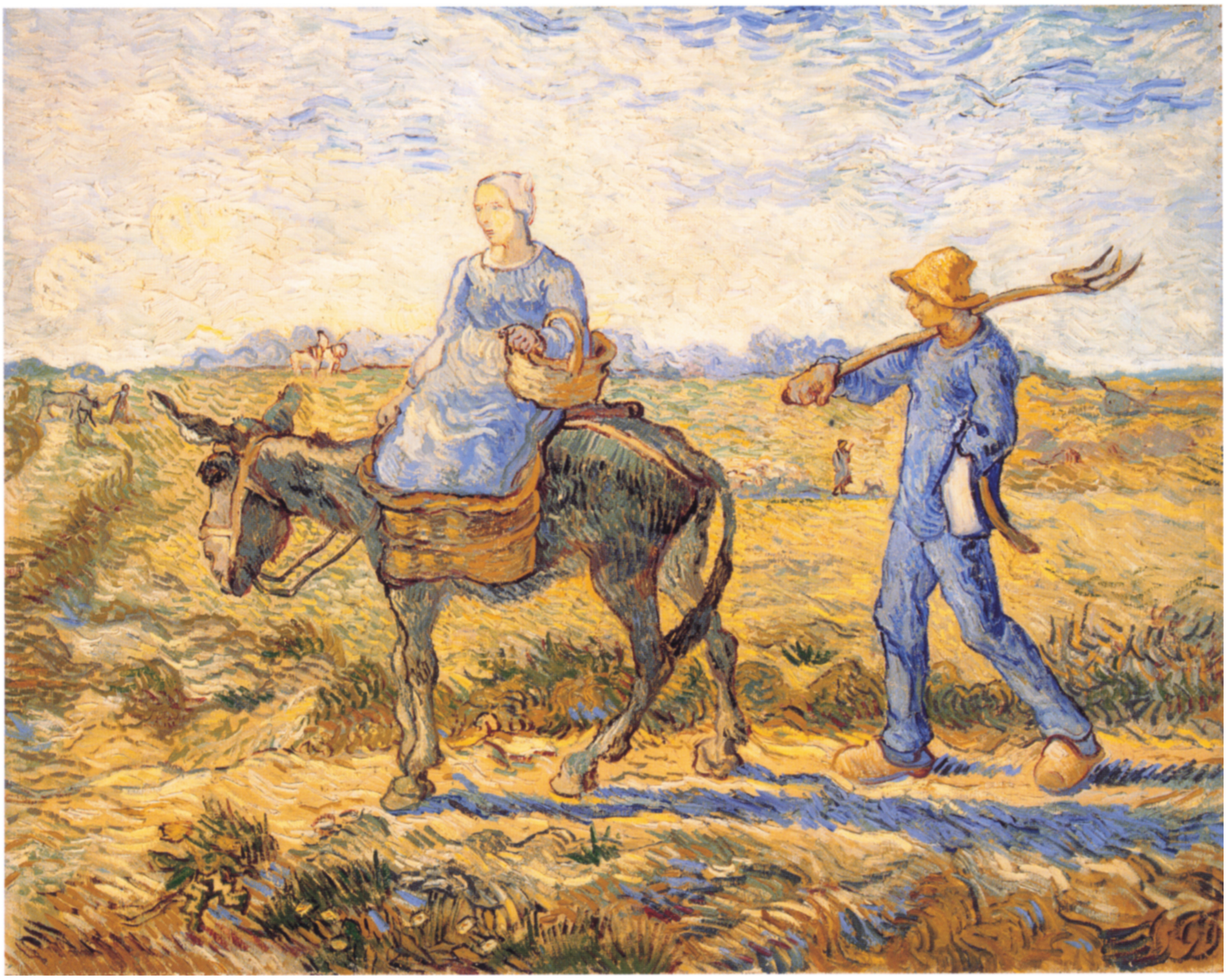
124
Jacques Adrien Lavieille
The Thresher, from the series
The Labors of the Fields (after Millet), 1852
Line block and letterpress printing on paper, 15.3 × 8.4 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



125
Vincent van Gogh
The Thresher (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 44 × 27.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

that he took up copying: the reason for painting the first work, after Delacroix's *Pietà*, was that his much-loved print had been damaged. "I was sad about it—then in the meantime I occupied myself painting it."[42]

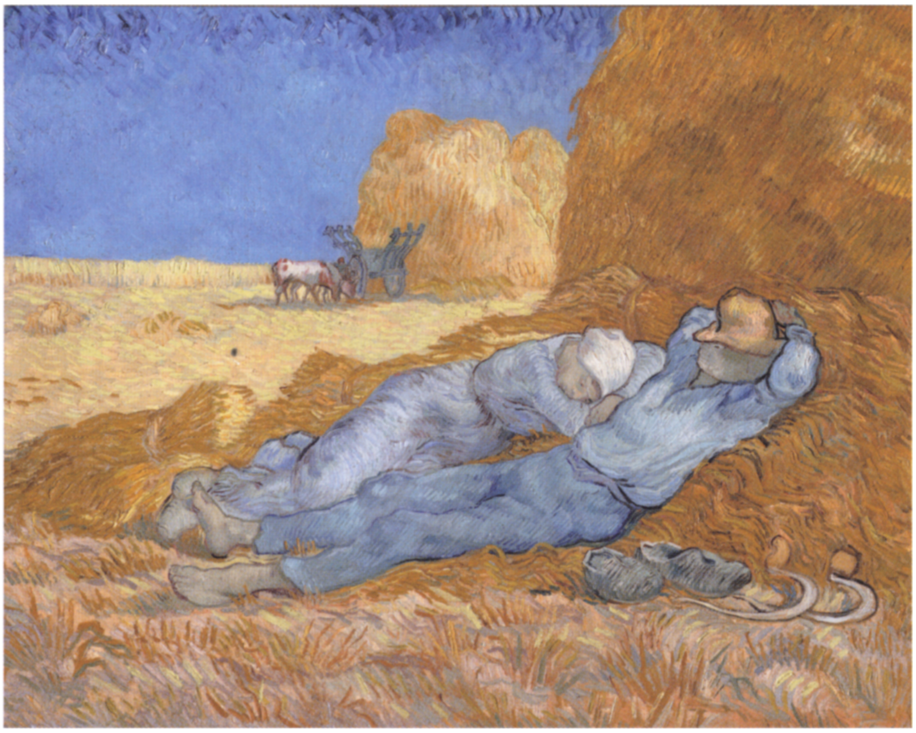
Immediately after completing the *Pietà*, Van Gogh started work on a series of ten small canvases after Millet's print series *The Labors of the Fields* (79, 123, 124, 125). He found this type of copying a useful exercise for painting figures when no live models were available, and so he asked Theo to send him more prints of works by Millet and Delacroix. His illness had undermined his confidence in his own artistic abilities, and so this revisiting of the work of two painters who had always inspired him now became a source of consolation and support. He nevertheless felt the need to justify his choice, as it was not innovative but "the *old* system."[43] In the early part of his career, Van Gogh had drawn many copies of prints; now he was painting them, as he had done with Japanese prints in Paris in 1887. On that occasion he had been seeking inspiration in the colors of the prints he emulated. In Saint-Rémy, by contrast, he worked from black-and-white reproductions and photographs and chose the colors himself, guided by his memory of the relevant artists' paintings. Van Gogh compared this "translating into color" with a musician interpreting a piece of music: "I place the black-and-white by Delacroix or Millet or after them in front of me as a subject. And then I improvise



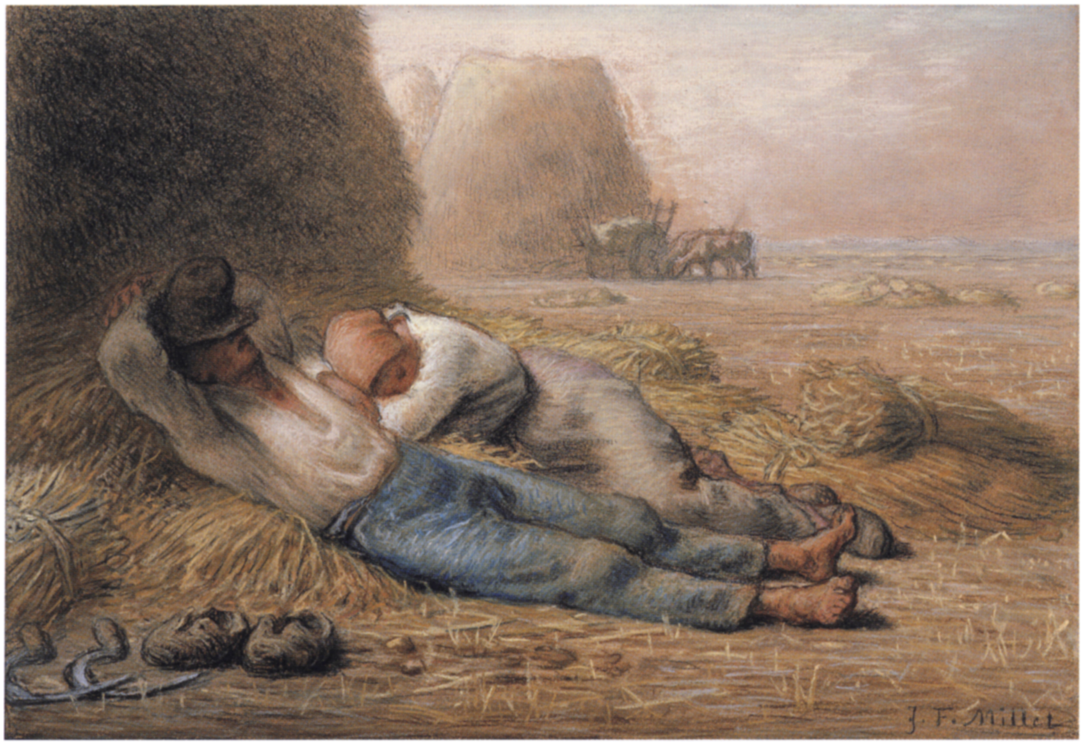
126
Vincent van Gogh
Morning: Peasant Couple Going to Work
(after Millet), 1890
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
Saint Petersburg

colour on it but, being me, not completely of course, but seeking memories of *their* paintings —but the memory, the vague consonance of colours that are in the same sentiment, if not right—that's my own interpretation."[44]

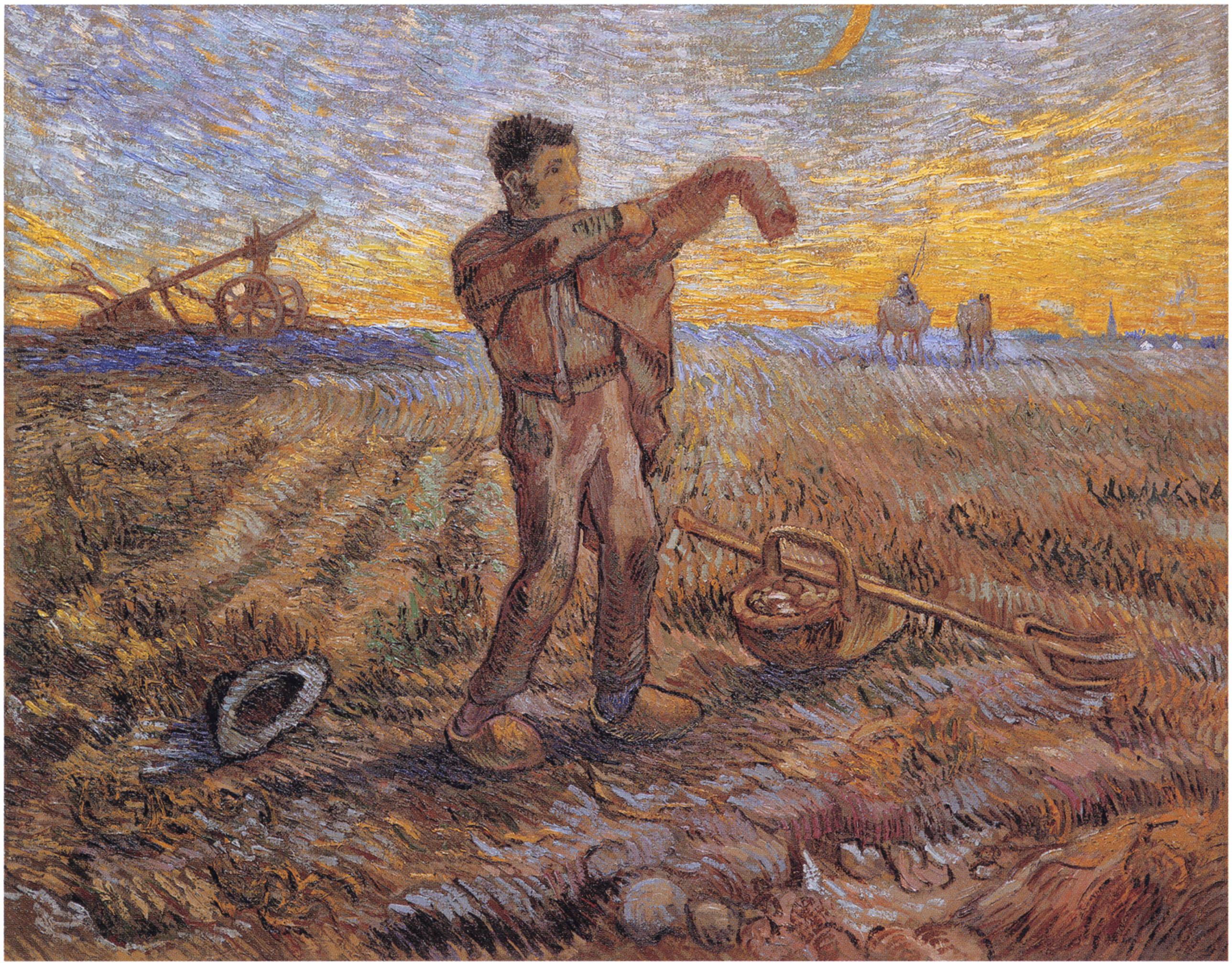
Once he had completed the ten small canvases in September 1889, Van Gogh began painting larger copies as soon as he received the prints he had requested from Theo. Between October 1889 and January 1890 he worked on an ambitious series of six works after prints by Millet, for which he selected large canvases. The series included four paintings after *The Four Times of the Day* (126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132), to which Van Gogh added *First Steps* (1890, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow* (135). The latter work is based on an etching after Millet's *Winter: The Plain of Chailly*, of which there are three versions: the 1862 painting (133) and two pastels that Millet made after it.[45] It shows the plain near Barbizon, the village where Millet lived, with the spire of Chailly in the distance. The plain is deserted, with the only sign of life being the crows that swarm above the frosty field. Landscapes without figures are unusual in Millet's work, as he mainly depicted agricultural labors. In this instance, the abandoned plow and harrow are the only reminders of human toil. The wintry scene was close to Van Gogh's heart: he had loved the changing of the seasons and the recurring cycle of rural labors ever since he was a child, and he



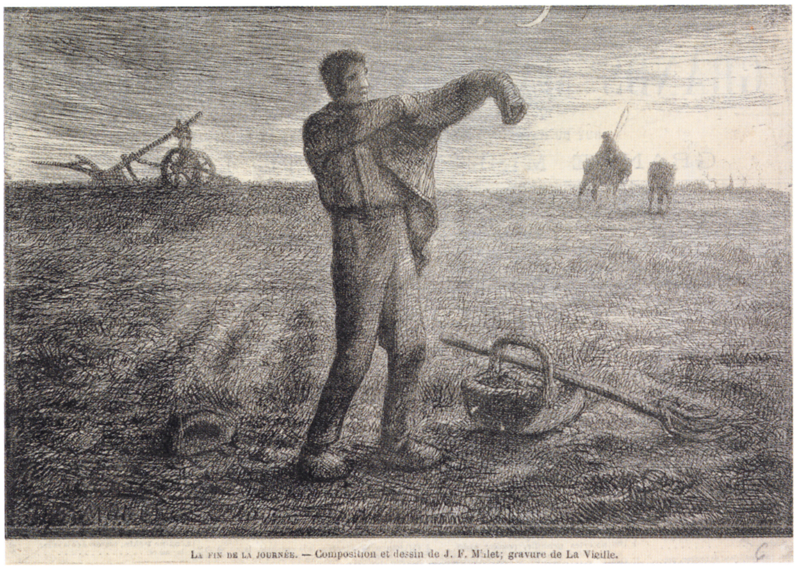
127
Vincent van Gogh
The Siesta (after Millet), 1889–90
Oil on canvas, 73 × 91 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
(gift of Mrs. Fernand Halphen,
born Koenigswarter, 1952)



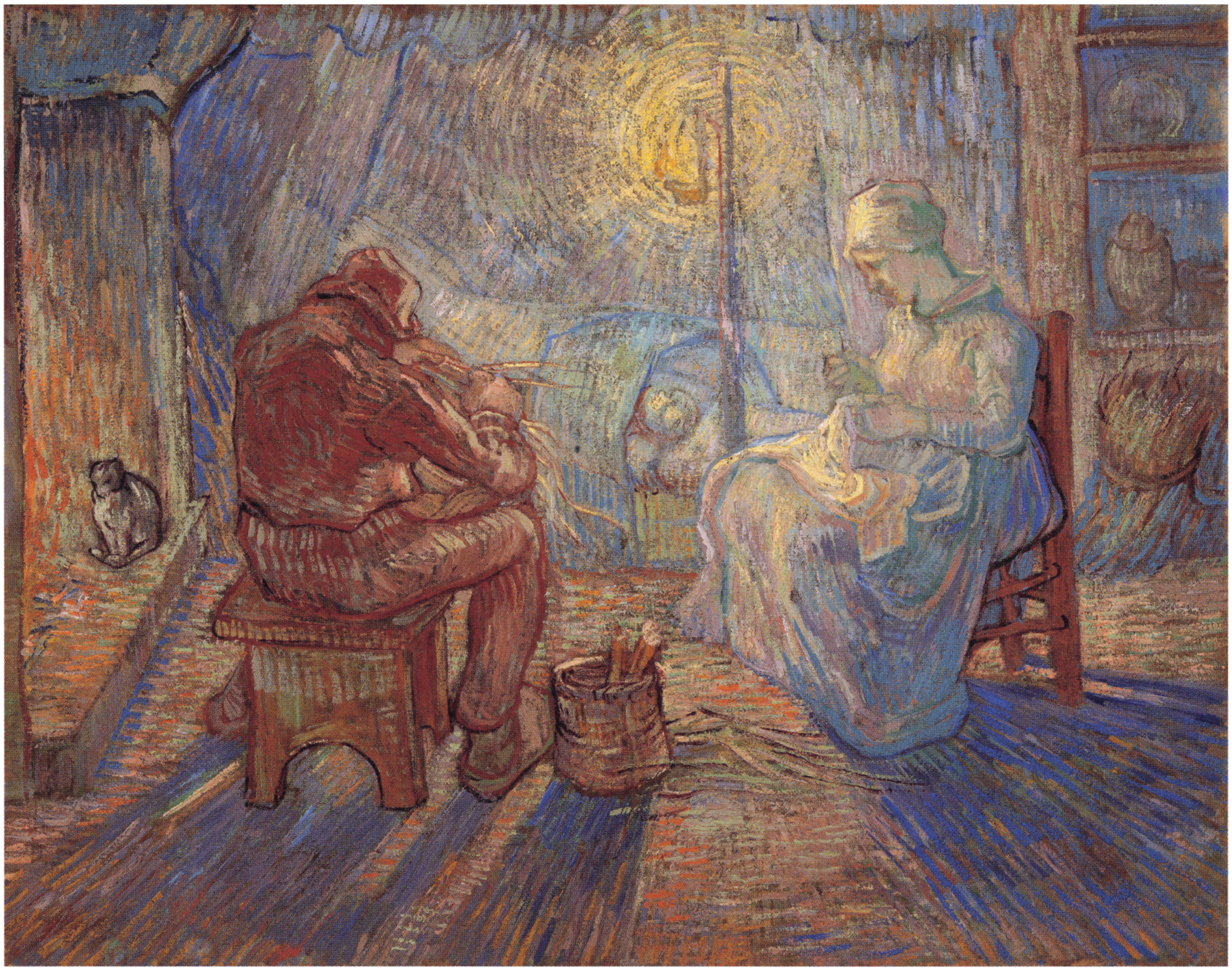
128
Jean-François Millet
Noonday Rest, 1866
Pastel and black Conté crayon
on paper, 29.2 × 41.9 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
(gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through
Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian
Shaw Haughton)



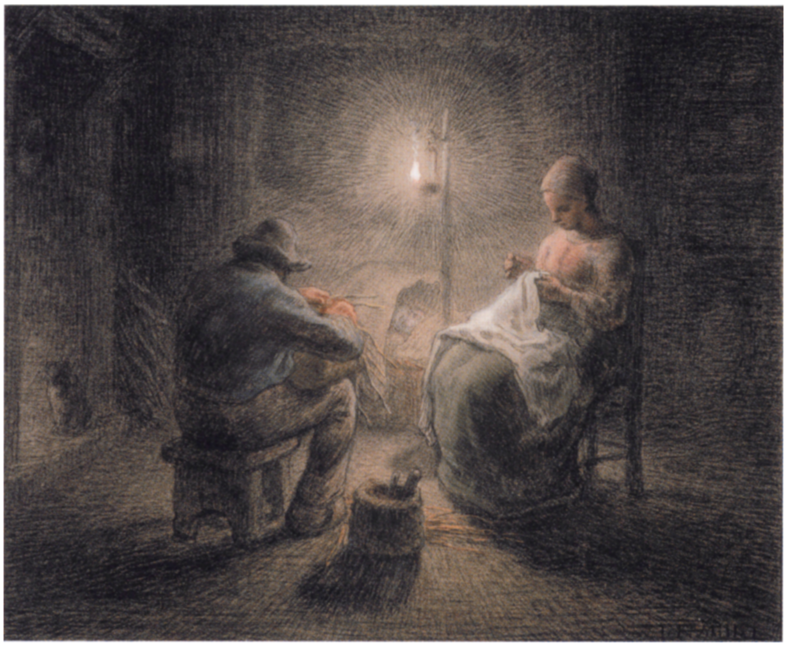
129
Vincent van Gogh
Evening: The End of the Day
(after Millet), 1889–90
Oil on canvas, 72 × 94 cm
Menard Art Museum, Komaki


La fin de la journée. — Composition et dessin de J. F. Millet; gravure de La Vieille.
6

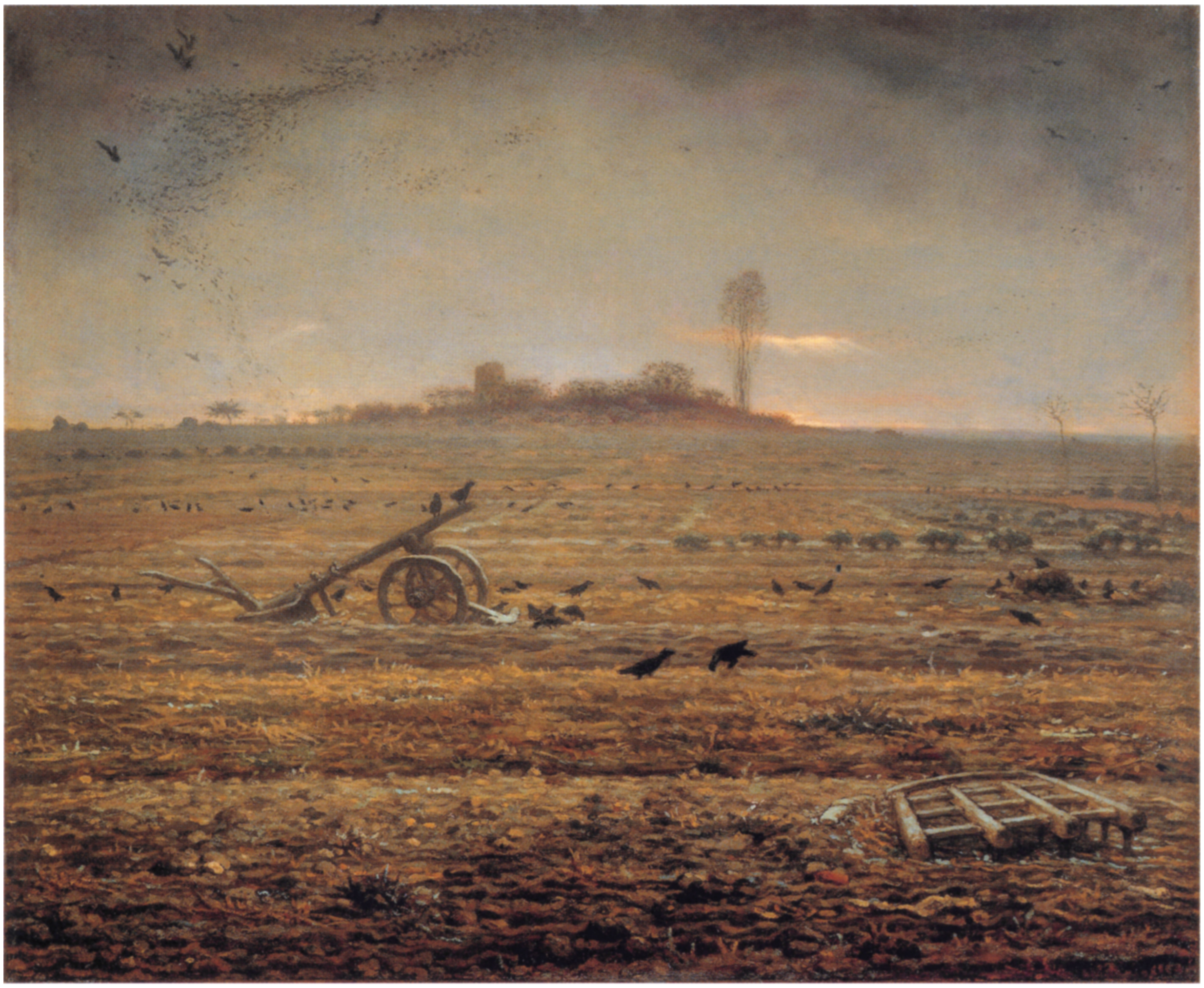
130
Jacques Adrien Lavieille
Evening, from the series *Four Moments of the Day* (after Millet), 1873
Line block and letterpress printing,
24 × 32.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



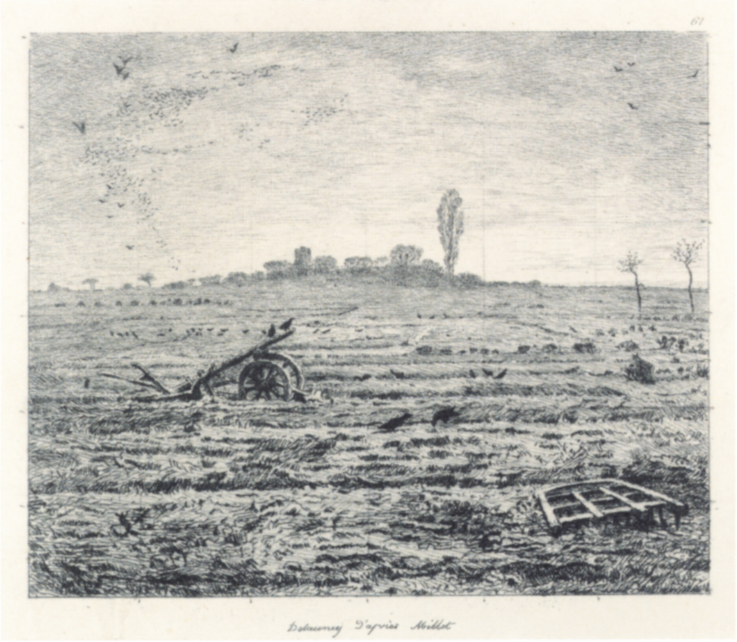
131
Vincent van Gogh
Evening (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 74.5 × 93.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



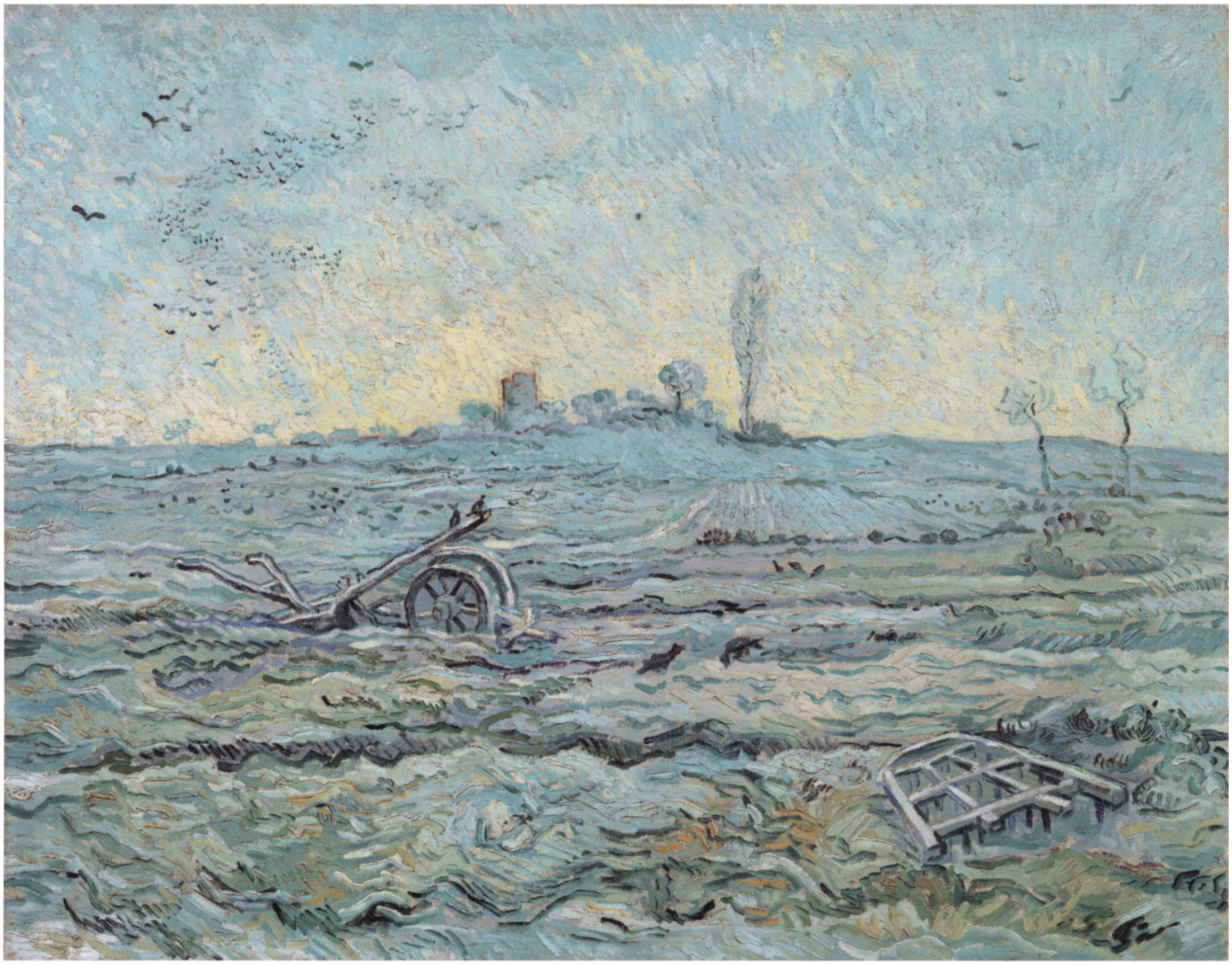
132
Jean-François Millet
Winter Evening, 1869
Pastel and black Conté crayon on paper,
43.8 × 54 cm
Museum of Fine Art, Boston
(gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through
Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian
Shaw Haughton)



133
Jean-François Millet
Winter: The Plain of Chailly, 1862
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73 cm
Belvedere, Vienna



134
Alfred Delauney
Winter: The Plain of Chailly
(after Millet), 1862–73
Etching and graphite on cardboard,
29.4 × 42.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



135
Vincent van Gogh
Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow
(after Millet), 1890
Oil on canvas, 72.1 × 92 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

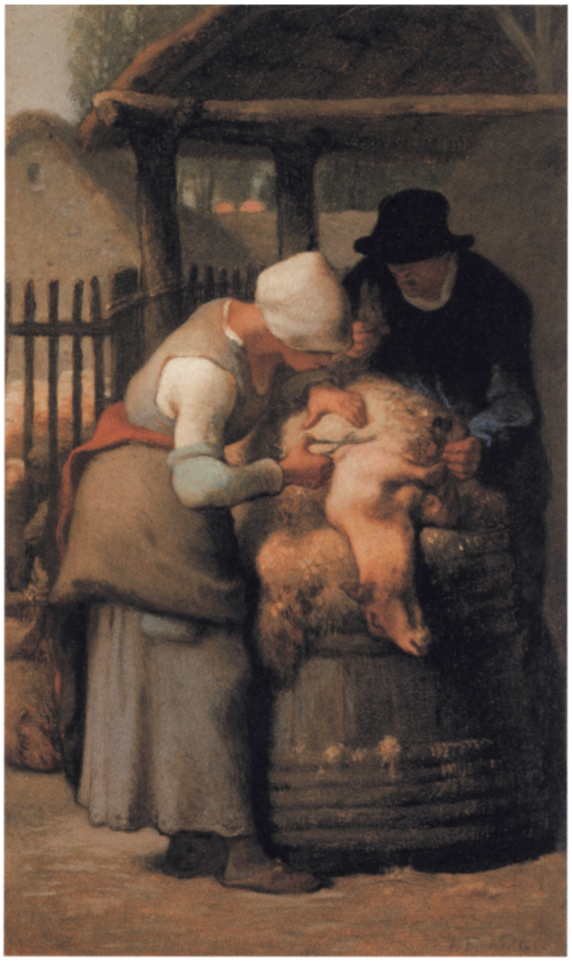
had a copy of this etching by Alfred Delauney after Millet in his possession as early as 1880, and based his painting on it nine years later (134). The image of the desolate landscape no doubt appealed to Van Gogh in this lonely and difficult period of his life, as did the season, since he copied the print in January during the depths of winter. It is possible to read the painting as an expression of his own situation, while the charming, sunny scene in *First Steps* —which, like *Evening* (131), he associated with Theo's imminent fatherhood—reflects not only his brother's more fortunate circumstances but also his own shattered dream of having a family.[46]

Vincent wrote to Theo in mid-January 1890 that *The Labors of the Fields* had been "gropings," but that they had proved their worth in serving as preparation for *The Four Times of the Day*, to which he had devoted "much thought to calculate the color."[47] He opted for variations of purple and yellow to suit the time of day: soft tones for the morning (126), more intense ones for the afternoon heat (127), warmer tones for twilight (129), and muted violet, lilac, and yellow to create a nocturnal effect (131). His approach to these canvases was much more ambitious than it had been in the small-scale studies of *The Labors of the Fields*, as witnessed not only by his carefully selected colors but also by his decision to use a grid to transfer the composition of most of these large works.[48]

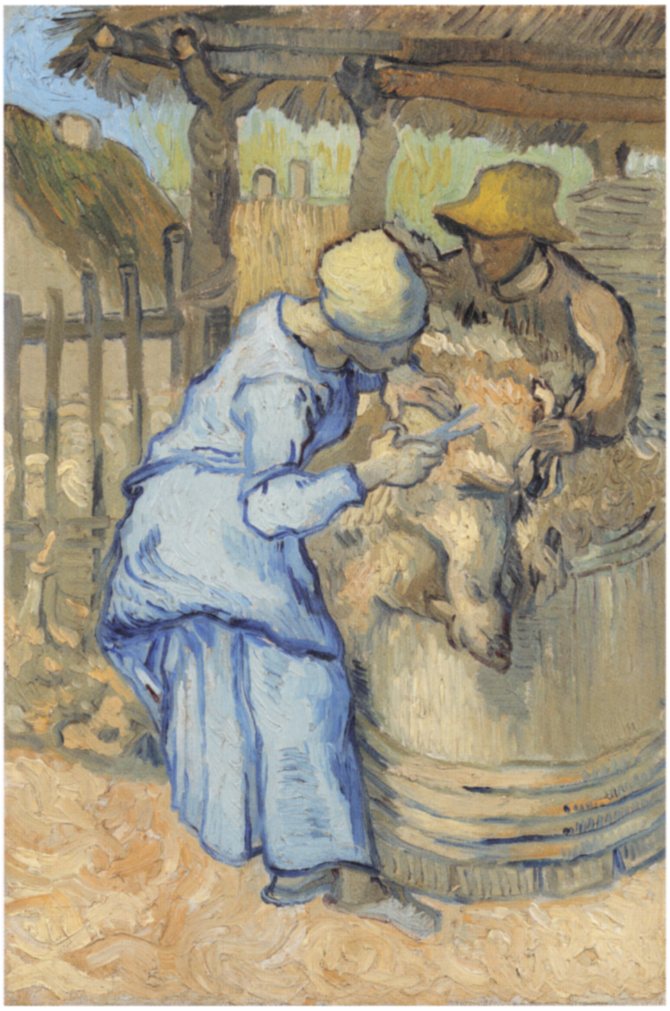
Van Gogh employed much brighter colors in his copies than Millet had done, thereby adding his own interpretation. Some of these colors have changed over time, however, as certain pigments have faded. Writing about *The Sheepshearer* (137), for instance, Van Gogh stated that he had painted it "in a color scale ranging from lilac to yellow."[49] These are the principal colors in the series—contrasting complementary tones in keeping with Delacroix's color theory. The red pigment in the mixture has however faded over time and only the blue now remains visible, resulting in a softer contrast than Van Gogh intended. One or more of these organic red pigments have also been detected in other copies, the fading of which has altered the appearance of the paintings. *Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow*, for example, now displays a monochromatic blue-green tone (135), but the edges of the canvas reveal that the field and sky were originally a warmer purple-gray and were hence closer to the colors of the painting Van Gogh saw at the Millet exhibition in 1887, on which the print that he used for his copy was based. The red pigment has faded on the surface of the paint layer, with the result that the original purple-gray now has a blue-green appearance. This makes the painting a colder winter scene than Millet's original, in which there is merely a dusting of frost on the field and no snow.[50]

The first copies Van Gogh painted in Saint-Rémy were for his own use, to hang on his bedroom walls, while he intended to give a small version of the *Pietà* to his sister Willemien, "to give you an idea of what Delacroix is."[51] The series of small canvases after *The Labors of the Fields* could, he thought, be used as a decoration for his studio, and he considered giving them to a school.[52] He initially viewed these works as color studies and exercises in representing the human figure, but he gradually grew more confident that these unusual, free experiments were actually less dependent on their examples than he had first thought. While he still viewed his copies after *The Labors* as "gropings," he wrote regarding the copies of *The Four Times of the Day* that they were done from a "most profound and sincere admiration for Millet" and that they had a certain value, if only to make Millet's work more accessible and to highlight its close affinities with contemporary art.[53] All the same, he sent the works to his brother with the instruction that they were not intended for public exhibition and that Theo was free to give them to their sisters, although he should definitely hold on to any that he happened to like himself.[54]

Van Gogh's ambivalent attitude toward his copies is once again apparent on this occasion. He considered *The Four Times of the Day* to be works of art in their own right, as he had given them a new interpretation through his use of color. At the same time, however, he was afraid that he would be criticized or misunderstood for painting them—a feeling that partly reflected his battle with mental illness, which as mentioned had filled him with self-doubt. Theo, by contrast, was effusive in his praise for the paintings.

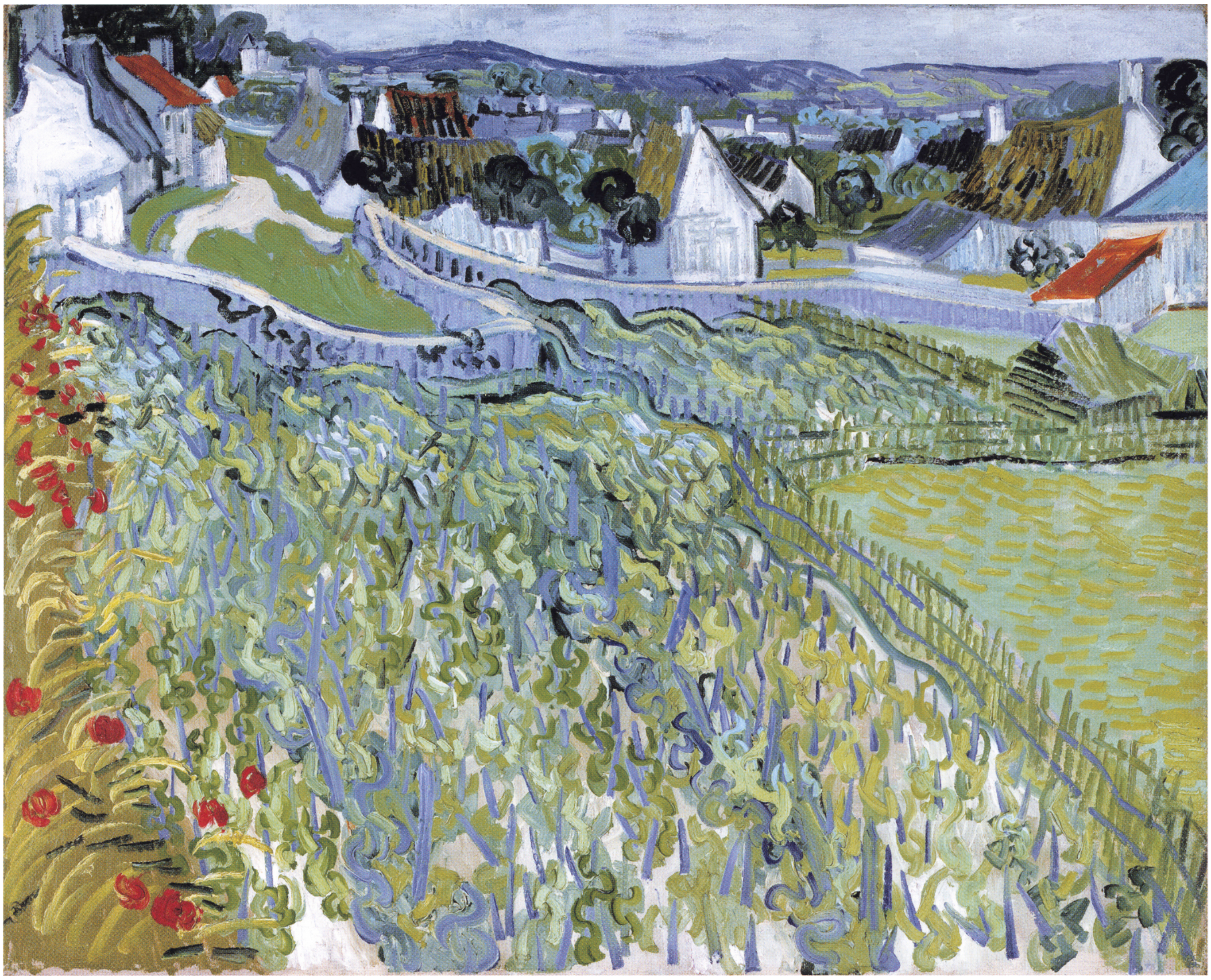


136
Jean-François Millet
Shearing Sheep, 1852–53
Oil on canvas, 40.7 × 24.8 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
(gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through
Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian
Shaw Haughton)

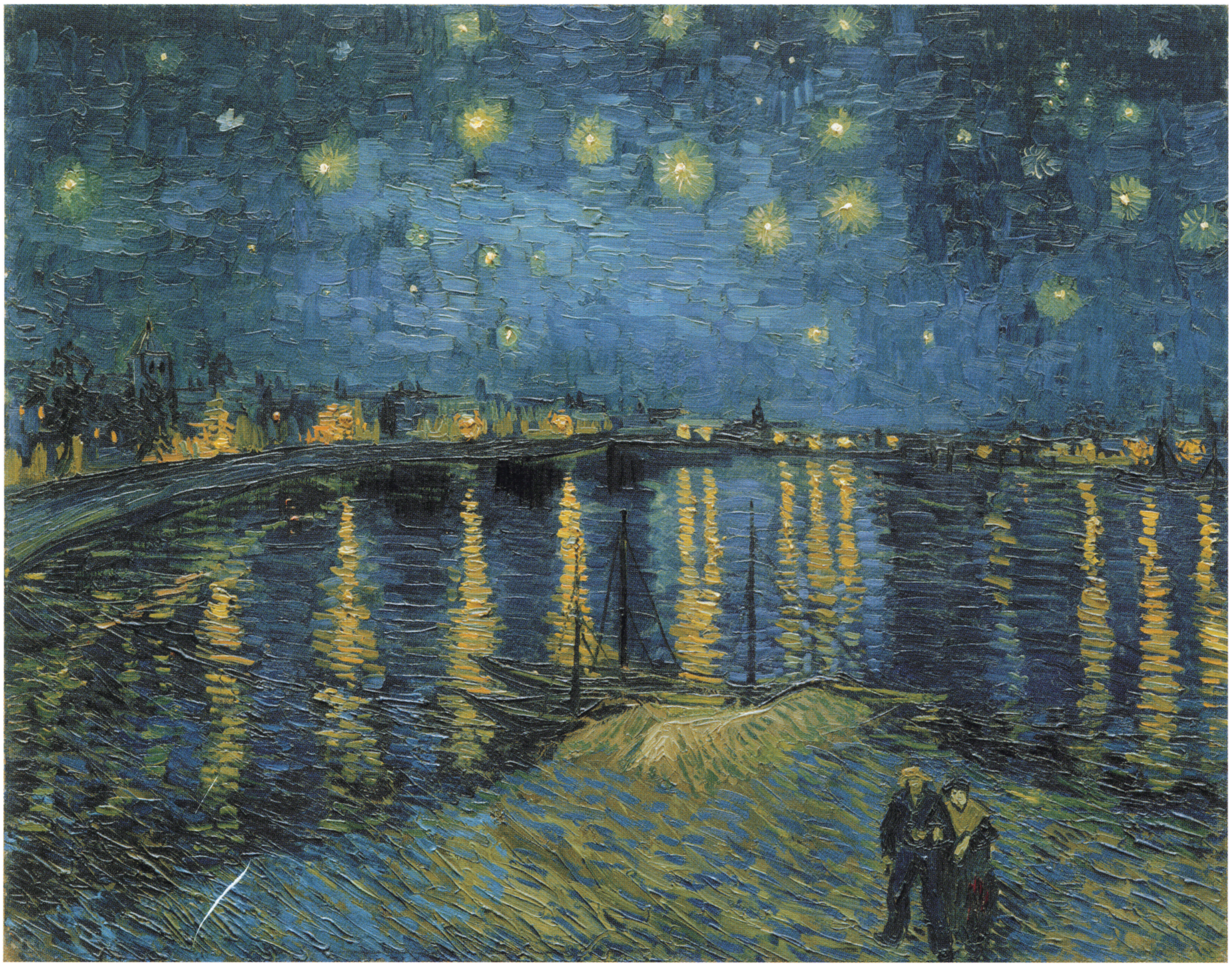


137
Vincent van Gogh
The Sheapshearer (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 43.5 × 29.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Writing about *Evening* (131), he told Vincent: "Copied like that it's no longer a copy. There's a tone in it and everything is so harmonious. It's really very successful."[55] Clearly pleased with this response, Van Gogh wrote back: "Even if they're criticized one day or despised as copies, it will remain no less true that it's justifiable to try to make Millet's work more accessible to the ordinary general public."[56] Van Gogh was to achieve this goal posthumously: his admiration for Millet and his emulation of his work undoubtedly helped secure the French artist's lasting fame.



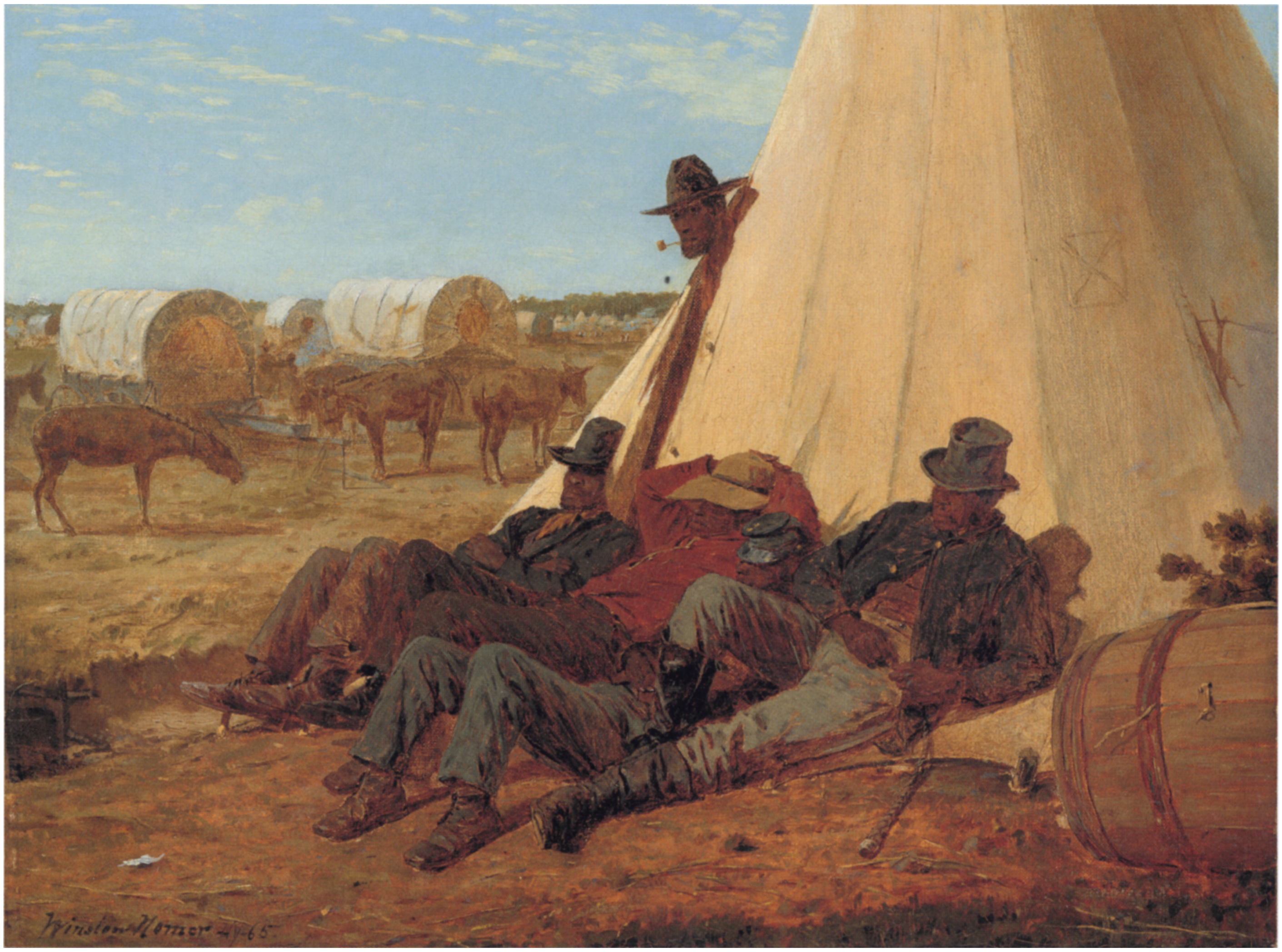
138
Vincent van Gogh
Vineyards at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 65.1 × 80.3 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum (funds given by
Mrs. Mark C. Steinberg)



139
Vincent van Gogh
Starry Night over the Rhône, 1888
Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 92 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (gift of Mr. and
Mrs. Robert Kahn-Sriber, in memory of
Mr. and Mrs. Fernand Moch, 1975)

Millet Worldwide: The Artist's Global Impact before 1900

Simon Kelly



140
Winslow Homer
The Bright Side, 1865
Oil on canvas, 32.4 × 43.2 cm
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
(gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jean-François Millet's work influenced a wide and international variety of artists, from North America to Germany and from Italy to Denmark. This essay argues that a transnational avant-garde emerged at this time, drawing on Millet's imagery. These artists reimagined and updated his work in different ways, from Winslow Homer's engagement with race to Giovanni Segantini's Divisionist imagery. For all their formal differences, these artists inherited a tradition from Millet of fusing artistic experiment and social engagement, and they were often democratic and even radically left-wing in their politics. Sometimes, they created informal networks, as for example the German artist Max Liebermann's associations with the Hague School and Segantini. Sometimes their mutual debt to Millet was evident in prestigious international exhibitions, like the 1889 Exposition Universelle, where their work appeared close by that of the elder artist.[1]

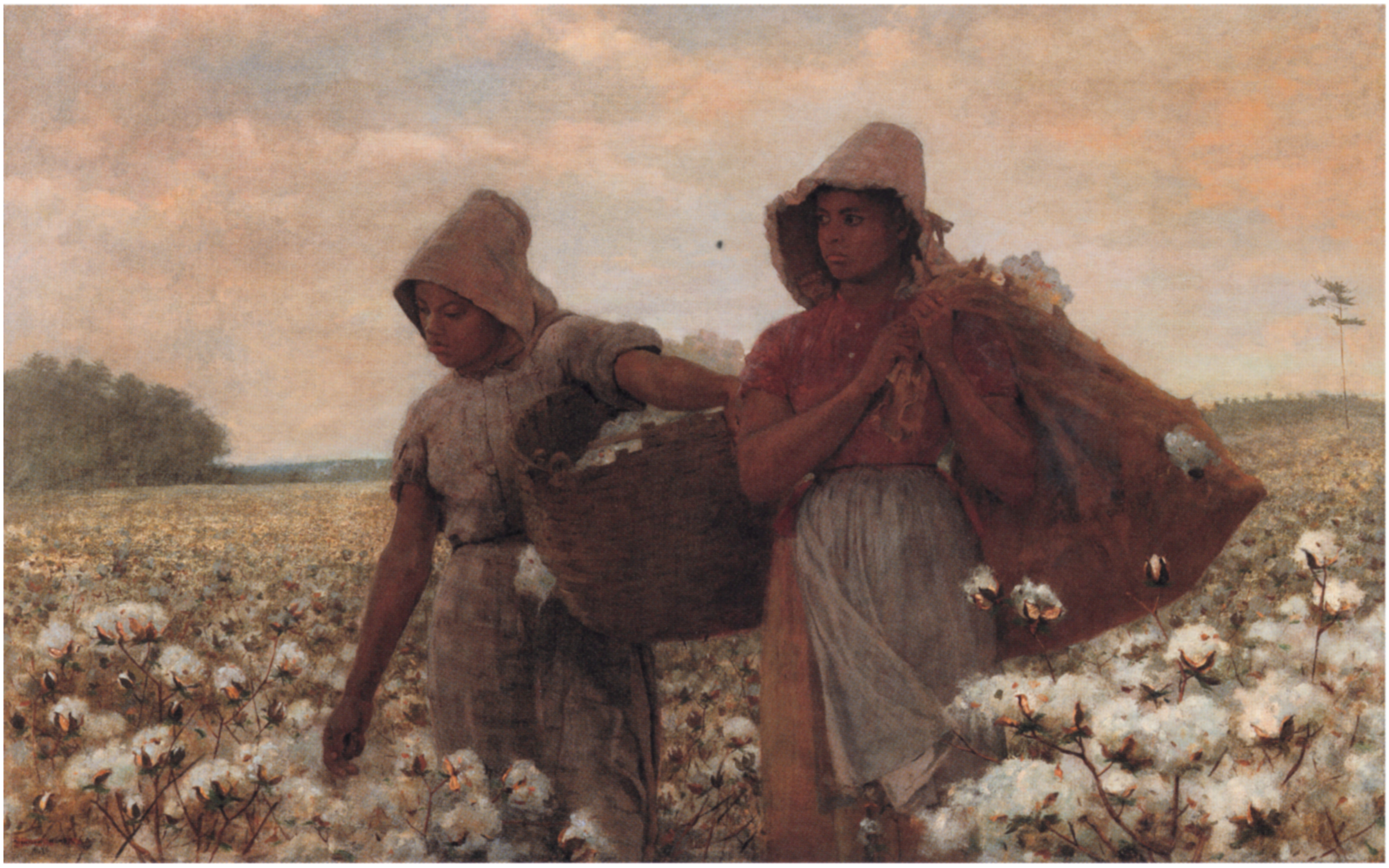
Millet's international impact was underpinned by the massive expansion in the circulation of visual imagery in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Even without visiting France, artists across the world were able to see his work in person as a result of the extensive sale of his pictures on the international art market, most notably in America but also across Europe. They could also experience it through an enormous trade in reproductions: Millet's works were widely disseminated in various printed forms, whether as individual prints or in the pages of a biography such as that of Alfred Sensier.[2] Adolphe Braun, the most important photographer of Millet's work, also sold a wide range of photographs after the artist's images for prices ranging from five to sixty francs, sending these to outlets and suppliers across the world.[3]

America

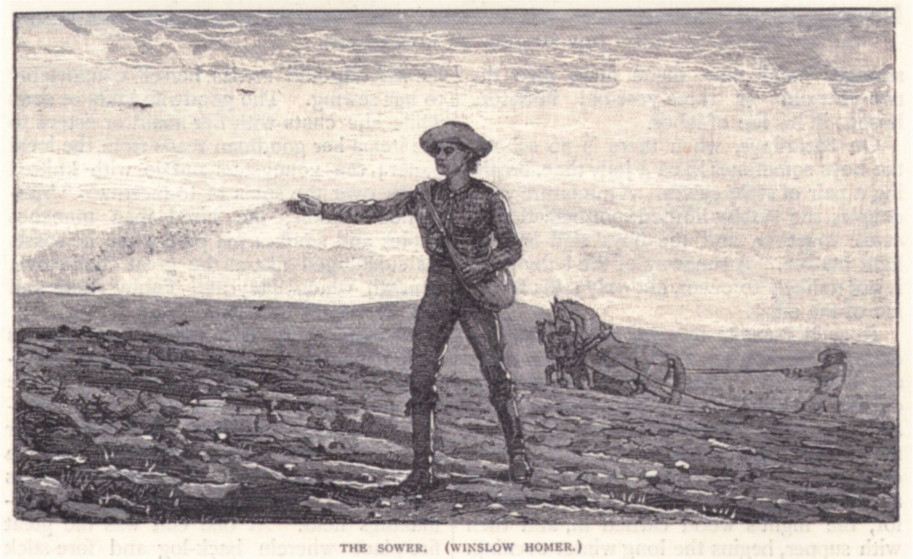
From the early 1850s, Millet was surrounded at Barbizon by a group of American painters, notably William Morris Hunt and William Perkins Babcock, who not only were themselves deeply impacted by his art but acted as conduits to spread his influence in their native country. During this time, major examples of Millet's paintings, such as *The Sower* (1850, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and *Harvesters Resting* (19), entered American collections in Boston and were shown often in exhibitions in that city, undoubtedly significantly influencing many artists.[4] In the later years of the century, the complaint about the large number of Millet's masterpieces now held in America would be a repeated refrain among French writers.[5]

Perhaps the greatest American painter of the nineteenth century, Winslow Homer, had a complex relationship with Millet.[6] Although he never spoke about Millet in his recorded statements, his work reflects an ongoing dialogue with the elder painter. Homer lived and worked in Boston until 1859 and would have seen there major works by Millet. Many in his circle were outspoken supporters of Millet.[7] Early on, Homer's pictures of the American Civil War would reference the French painter. Most notably, *The Bright Side* (140), his view of African American muleteers resting outside a tent (on its sunny 'bright side'), was mediated by his knowledge of the reclining French peasants in Millet's *Mid-day* print, first published in 1860 (147).[8] When first exhibited, the critical response to the work was mixed, with many viewers seeing the resting men as a reference to a stereotype of the perceived laziness of African Americans.[9] Others also found humor and a sense of caricature in the work, notably in the figure of the man peering out from the tent. Yet despite these responses, Homer's painting can be seen as having an empathetic engagement with his sitters, whom he represents with composed self-possession. Homer was, indeed, the nineteenth-century white American artist who depicted African Americans with arguably the most insight. Later, in his *Cotton Pickers* (141), he would also represent African American women laborers in the South with a dignity that recalls Millet's images of the French peasantry.

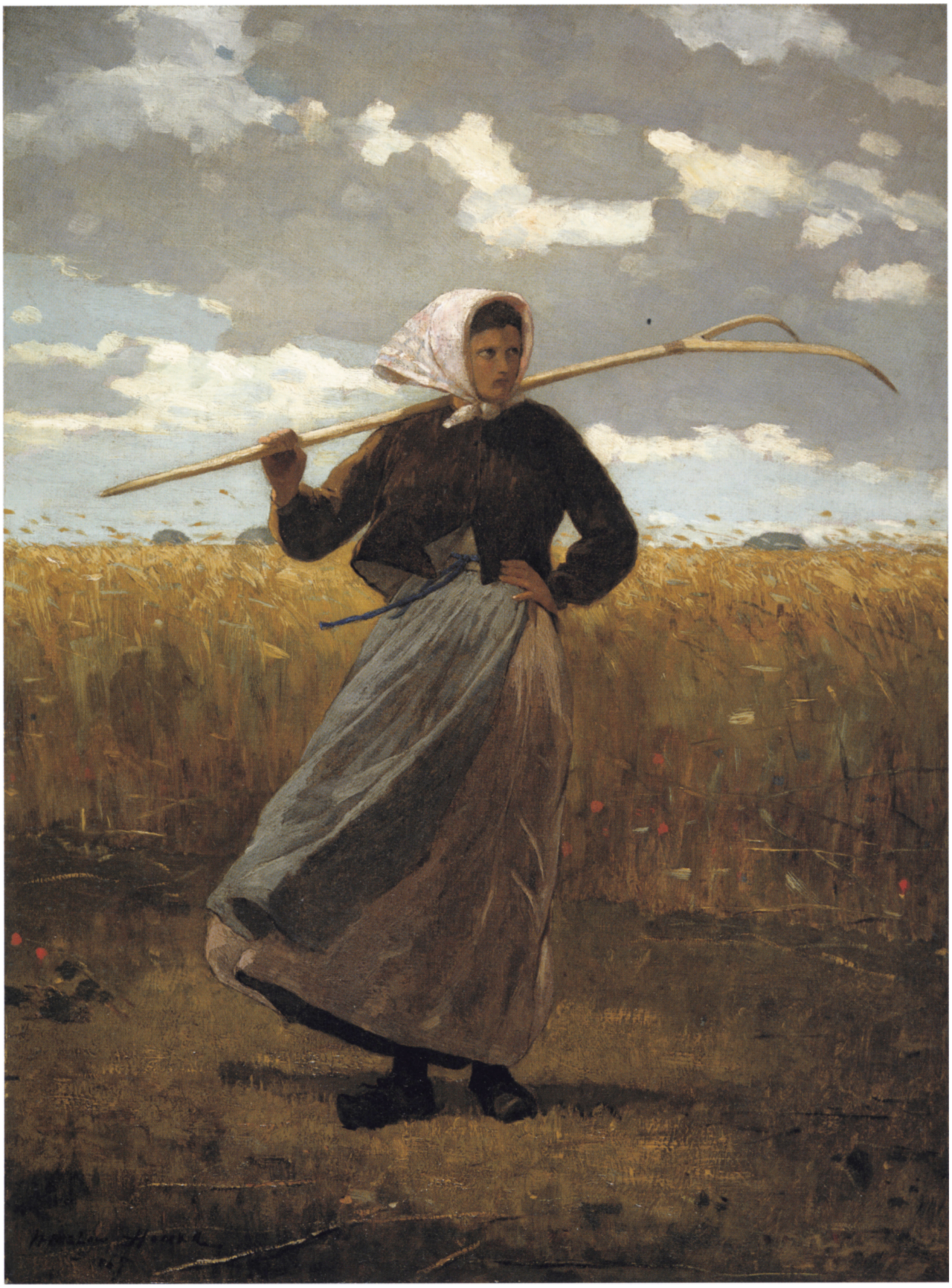
Homer spent ten months in France from December 1866 until the fall of 1867, when he was able to see his *Bright Side* exhibited at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris. We know little else about this visit, and although he did paint at Cernay, a village on the outskirts of the French capital, it is unknown as to whether he went to Barbizon. However, Homer would presumably have seen Millet's important exhibition



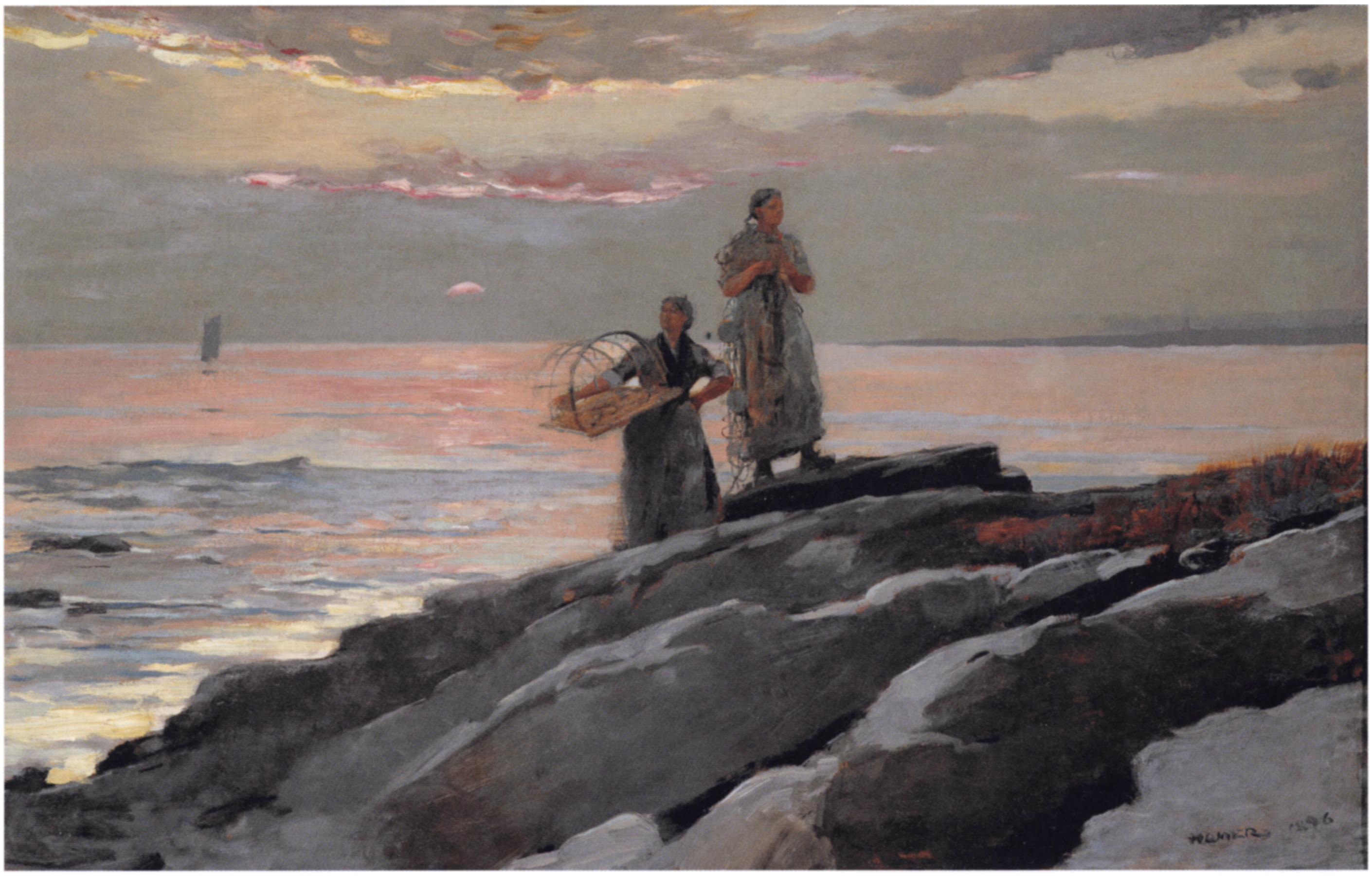
141
Winslow Homer
The Cotton Pickers, 1876
Oil on canvas, 61.1 × 96.8 cm
Los Angeles County Museum of Art


THE SOWER. (WINSLOW HOMER.)

142
Winslow Homer
The Sower, 1878
Wood engraving on paper, 7.5 × 12.7 cm
Boston Public Library



143
Winslow Homer
The Return of the Gleaner, 1867
Oil on canvas, 61 × 45.7 cm
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,
Bentonville



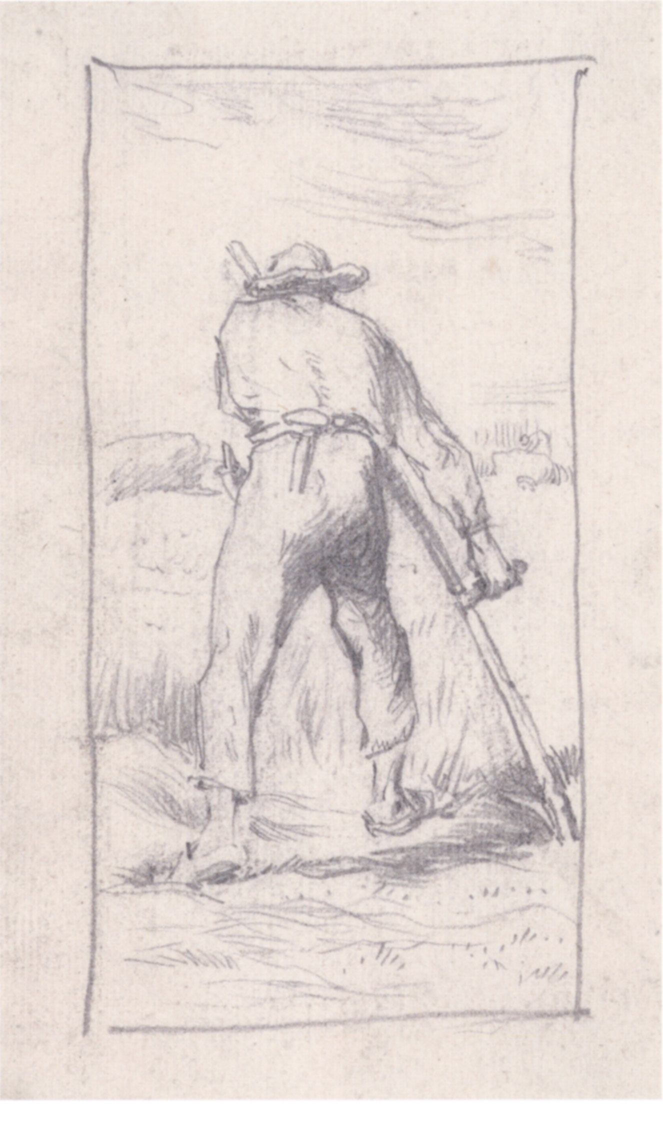
144
Winslow Homer
Saco Bay, 1896
Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 96.4 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown

at the Exposition Universelle. During this visit he painted at least nineteen paintings, generally focusing on rural subjects, as for example in *The Return of the Gleaner* (143). Here, a gleaner stands in an assertive pose with a two-pronged wooden fork on her shoulder. Behind are three bands: earth, wheat, and sky. Homer's engagement with Millet's rural subjects would continue through the 1870s, and his engraving *The Sower* (142), published in 1878, clearly derived its pose from that of Millet's earlier painting.

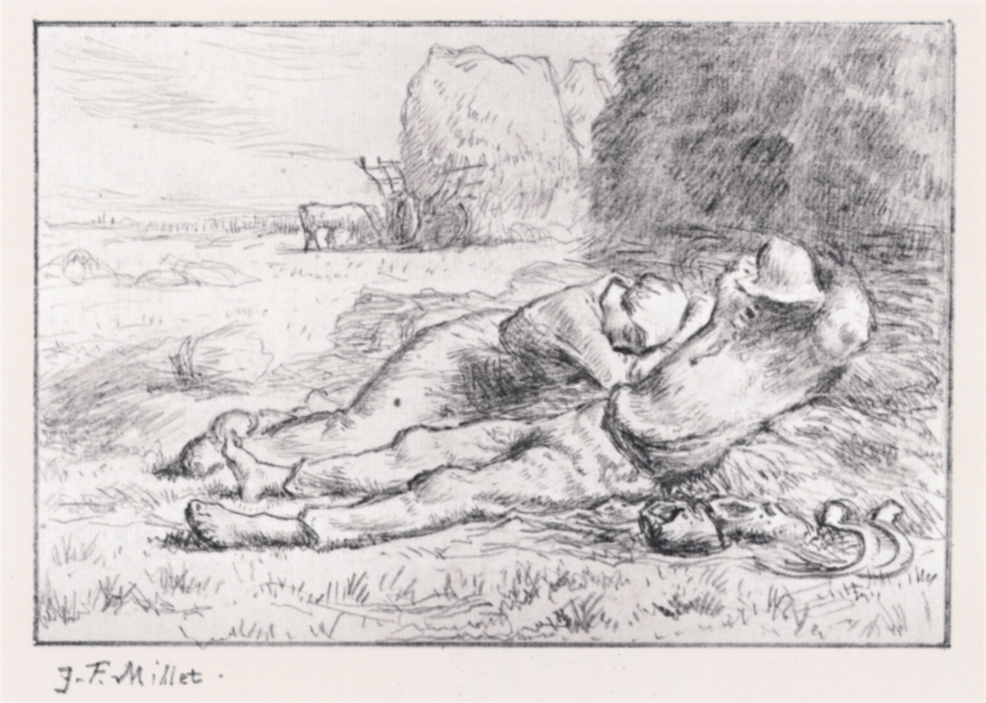
Following his move to his studio at Prouts Neck, a peninsula in southern Maine, in 1883, Homer focused on marine images, including monumental, silhouetted forms of fishermen and fisherwomen.[10] Sometimes Homer represented these women close up, and his paintings of them, in which they are often shown from below, relate particularly to Millet's series of milkmaids, also viewed from below and in contre-jour. In *Saco Bay* (144), however, he showed two women at a greater distance as they carry fishing nets and lobster traps. These are among the last figures to appear in Homer's work. The luminous marine view—one contemporary reviewer described the sunset as "strawberry"[11]—indicates the direction that Homer's work would follow in the final years of his life as he focused his attentions on the sea itself and the rugged Maine coastline. Perhaps Homer was aware of Millet's own many marines that represented the sea and the craggy, ancient cliffs of the Normandy coast. *Cliffs at Gruchy* (44), for example, was in the collection of the businessman Quincy Adams Shaw in Boston. Homer's Prouts Neck was, in a sense, the equivalent of Millet's Gruchy.

John Singer Sargent, although best known for his extravagant society portraits and luminous views of Venice, showed an interest in the peasant scenes of Millet from an early age. Indeed his second exhibit at the Paris Salon, in 1878, would be a view of Breton peasants, *Setting out to Fish* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC). Following his arrival in Paris in 1874 as a precocious young student, he produced a group of four drawings after various print compositions by Millet. Among these was a small study in rapid, notational marks of a reaper (145), after Millet's image first published in 1853 (122).[12] He also produced a slightly larger drawing (146) after *Mid-day* (147), the print of peasants resting against a haystack that had earlier inspired Homer. Sargent's interest in the French painter was probably encouraged by the many exhibitions and sales of Millet's work in 1875. This interest would remain with him, and in 1882 he wrote the following to the writer and aesthetician Violet Paget, better known by her pseudonym Vernon Lee, in response to her belief that artistic talent had no relationship to morality of character: "There are some like Dürer and Rembrandt and the French Millet who are very 'inquiétants' [troubling] for one who thinks as you do, for their talent is enormous too and they have 'intimité' [intimacy]."[13] Sargent here grouped Millet with two great artists of the past as examples of those who combined exceptional formal aptitude with a moral sense.

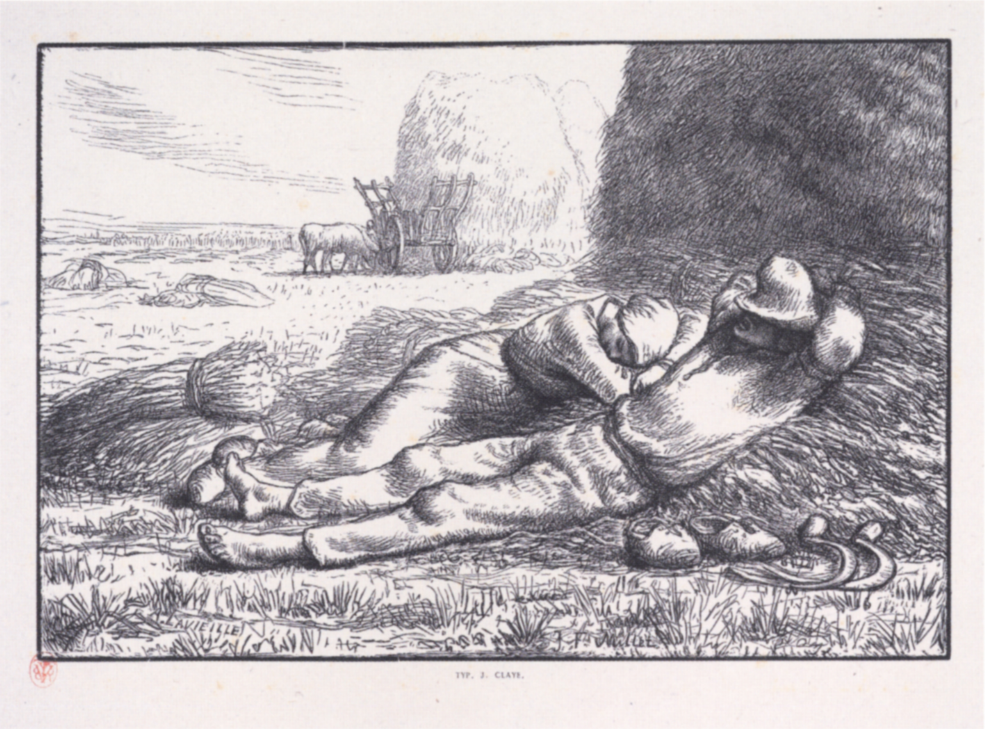
George Inness, the noted American landscape painter, also deeply admired Millet. He had stayed in Barbizon on repeated visits in the early to mid-1850s, when he could have met Millet in person. He would also have been familiar with the artist's work in many American collections. Indeed, by the early 1880s, Millet's work was owned by many major collectors not



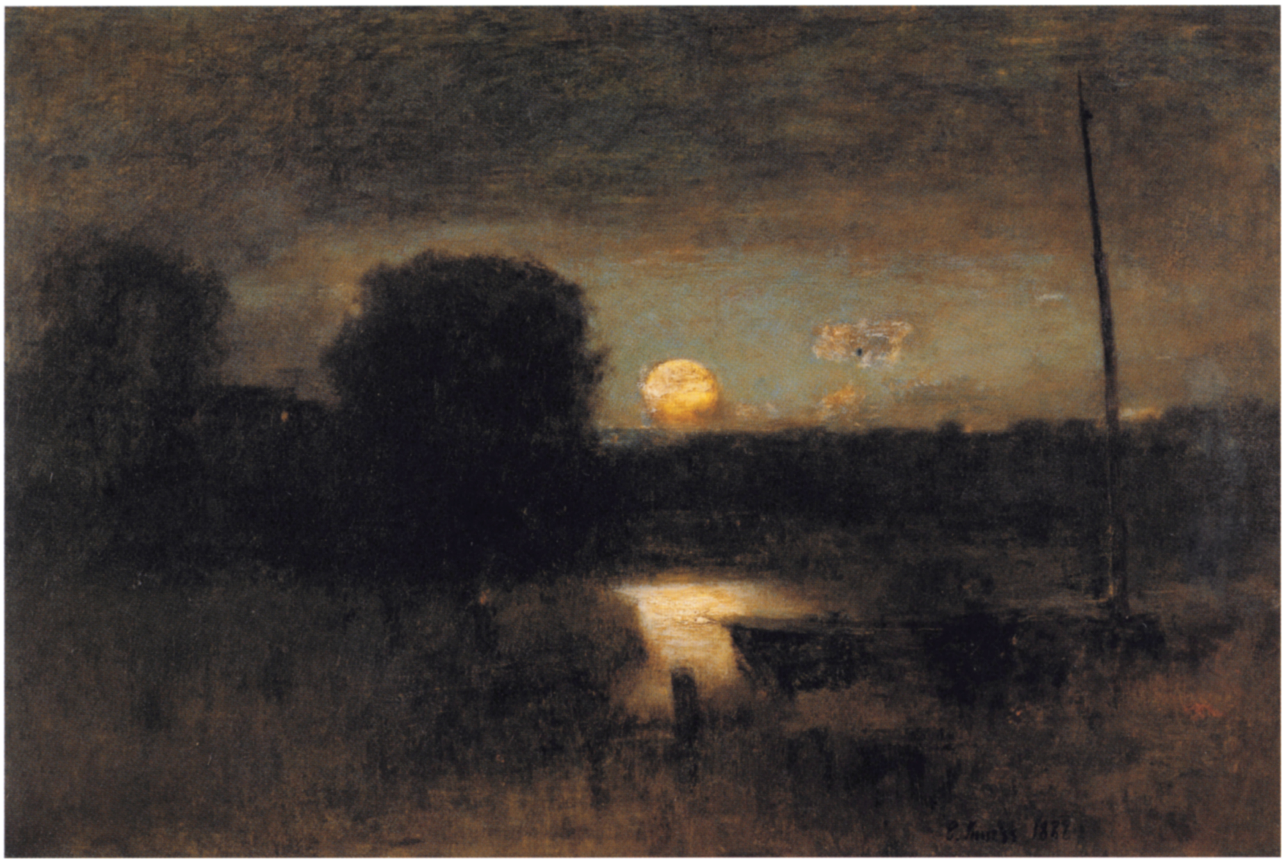
145
John Singer Sargent
The Reaper (after Millet), c. 1875
Graphite on paper, 17.5 × 10.2 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950)



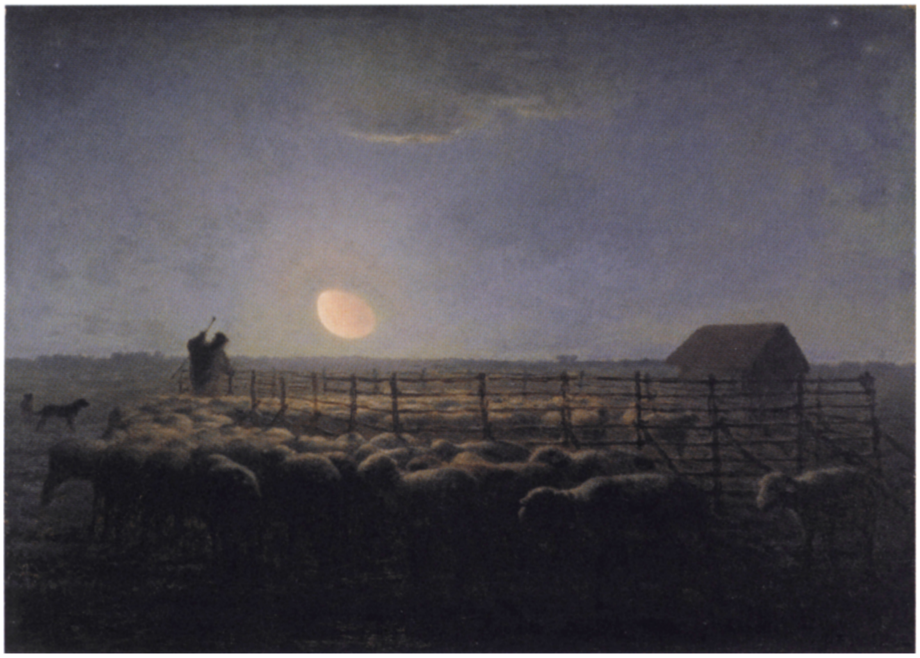
146
John Singer Sargent
Noon (after Millet), c. 1875
Graphite on paper, 14.9 × 21.9 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950)


LAVIEILLE
J. F. Millet
TYP. J. CLAYE.

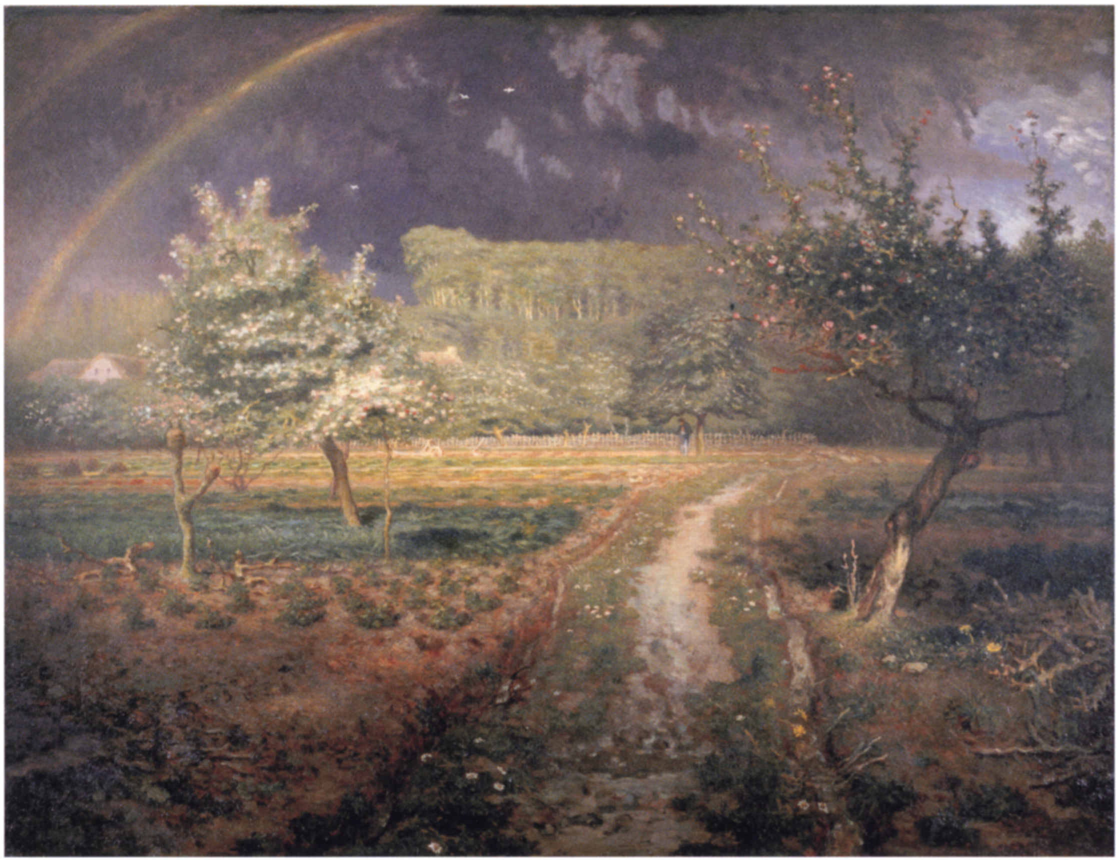
147
Jacques Adrien Lavieille,
Mid-day, from the series *Four Moments of the Day* (after Millet), c. 1860
Wood engraving on chine collé, 20.8 × 27.1 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(Harris Brisbane Dick Fund)



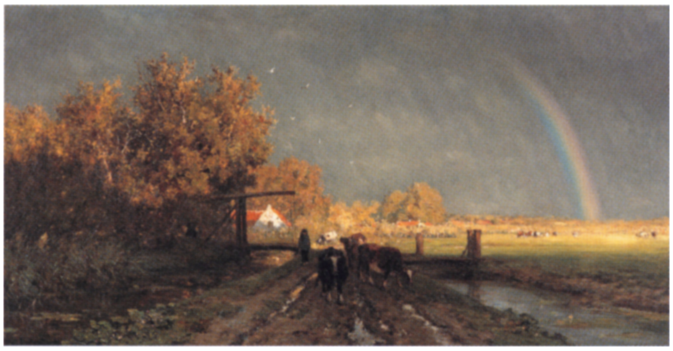
148
George Inness
Moonrise, 1888
Oil on canvas, 73.6 × 111.7 cm
Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton



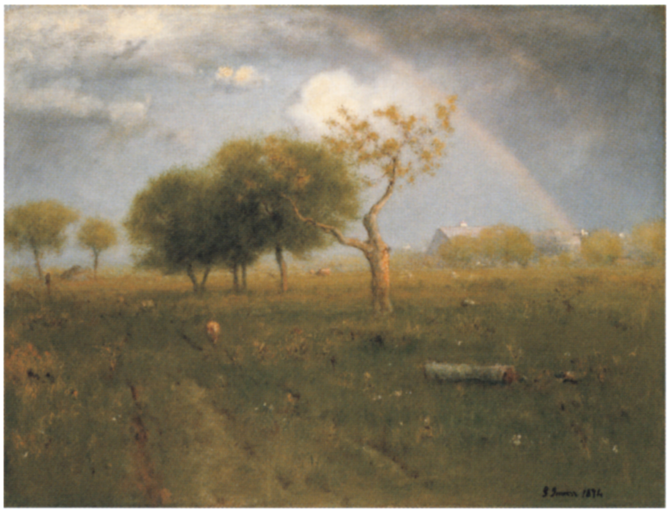
149
Jean-François Millet
The Sheepfold, Moonlight, 1856–60
Oil on panel, 45.3 × 63.4 cm
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore



150
Jean-François Millet
Spring, c. 1868–73
Oil on canvas, 86 × 111 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (bequest of
Mrs. Frédéric Hartmann, 1887)



151
Willem Roelofs
The Rainbow, 1875
Oil on canvas, 57.7 × 110.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Den Haag, The Hague



152
George Inness
After a Summer Shower, 1894
Oil on canvas, 81.9 × 107.6 cm
Art Institute of Chicago

only in Boston but also in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.[14] In 1879 Inness spoke in very complementary terms of the French painter's work:

> Millet is one of those artistic angels whose aim was to represent pure and holy sentiments—sentiments which speak of love, of labor, of sorrow, and so on. Many of his pictures, indeed, display weaknesses to which minds like his are at times peculiarly liable, as though the strength of flesh and blood had overcome the power of the spirit. But he is the very first in that class of painters who reproduce such sentiments in their paintings; and in his paintings do we find the highest of these sentiments.[15]

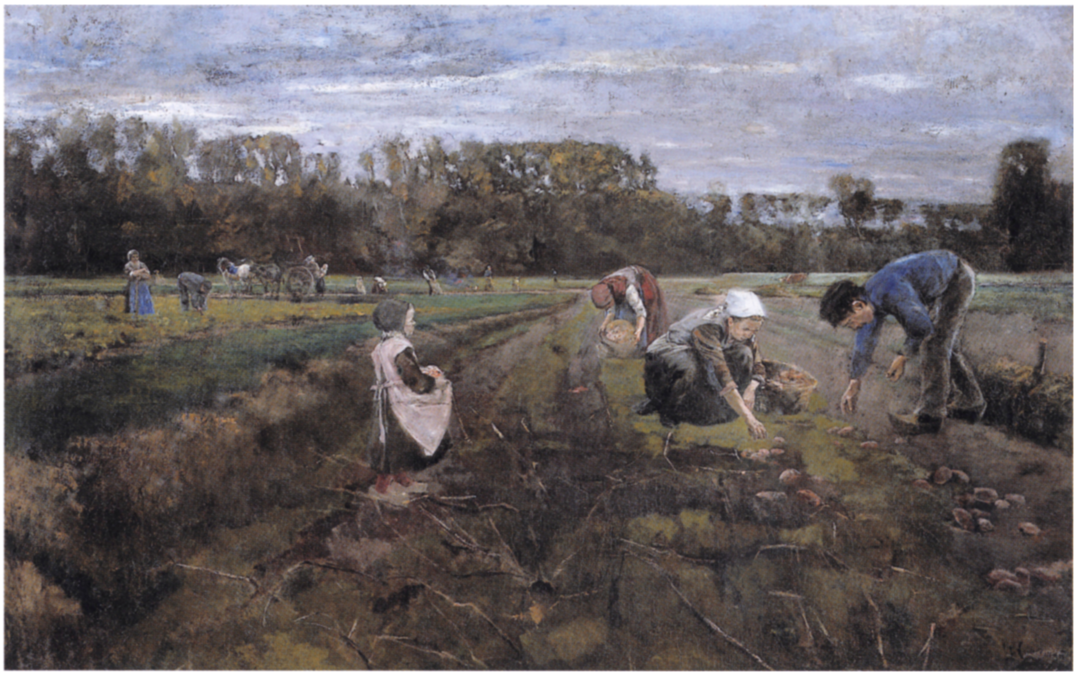
Inness did not elaborate on Millet's "weaknesses," but he was perhaps alluding to the more erotic, earthy elements in his work. Inness's belief in a spiritual underpinning to the natural world can be compared to Millet's own approach. According to Sensier, Millet expressed his conviction that his viewers might feel the "infinite" when they saw his imagery of the plains around Barbizon.[16] Inness's personal theology was related to a more specific religious belief system, namely that of the eighteenth-century Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg.[17]

Inness's landscapes suggest formal similarities with Millet's own pure landscapes. *Moonrise* (148), a complex tonal view that the artist and his close admirers considered among his greatest works, engaged with a genre that Millet had favored, notably in *Sheepfold, Moonlight* (149).[18] The American Impressionist painter Childe Hassam later wrote, "To me George Inness has painted this wonderful effect in nature as no one else in the history of art ever has, and there are only one or two other moonlight pictures that I know of in art that can rank with it, one by Whistler, and the small picture of the waning moon (called the Sheepfold, I think) by Millet."[19] One of Inness's last paintings, *After a Summer Shower* (152), was also closely comparable to Millet's *Spring* (150). The latter work was on view at the Musée du Luxembourg, having been gifted in 1887, and could have been seen by the artist on his final trip to Paris in 1894.[20] Both pictures capture a fleeting rainbow effect and light breaking through passing storm clouds.

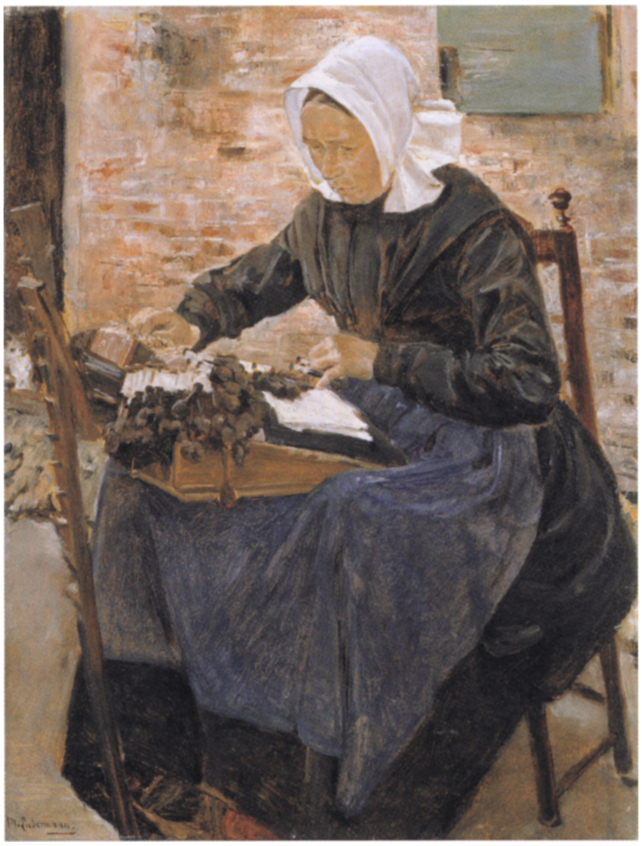
Germany

The leading painter in Germany in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Max Liebermann, was particularly influenced by Millet.[21] He even described him in 1890 as "our master for us all."[22] Liebermann adopted an Impressionist method in the late 1890s, turning to scenes of bourgeois leisure, but in the 1870s and 1880s he produced a body of naturalistic work, focusing on peasant subjects, that closely related to Millet's imagery. Liebermann believed that his depictions of the laboring classes might help to bring about social reform. He moved to Paris from Weimar in 1873 and would spend five years there. In a memoir published in 1889, he remembered his reasons for the move, noting that he "was powerfully drawn there by Munkácsy, but even more so by Troyon, Daubigny, Corot, and above all Millet, and to this day I have remained loyal to my enthusiasm for the latter, whom I consider the most epoch-making artist of modern painting."[23]

Liebermann spent his summers in Barbizon in 1874—when he may have met Millet—and 1875. During this time he painted his *Potato Harvest at Barbizon* (153), a large-scale work underpinned by studies of individual figures that related to Millet's *Gleaners* (22). Liebermann used a rough brushstroke and muted palette, enlivened by a few color accents of red. Later, in 1881, on one of his many visits to the Netherlands, he painted a view of a lacemaker (154) absorbed in her study that looks back to Millet's related imagery of women spinning (28).[24] Liebermann's display at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, concentrating on rural workers, won him a gold medal. In the same year, Liebermann reiterated his admiration for Millet, the Frenchman whom he "venerated the most." He went on: "he—at least in his drawings—captured the impression of nature most truthfully (which is for me, tantamount to most beautifully)."[25] Later, in 1897, Liebermann, in the face of nationalistic, anti-French sentiment, played a significant role in encouraging the director of the National Gallery in Berlin,



153
Max Liebermann
Potato Harvest at Barbizon, 1875
Oil on canvas, 108.5 × 172 cm
Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf



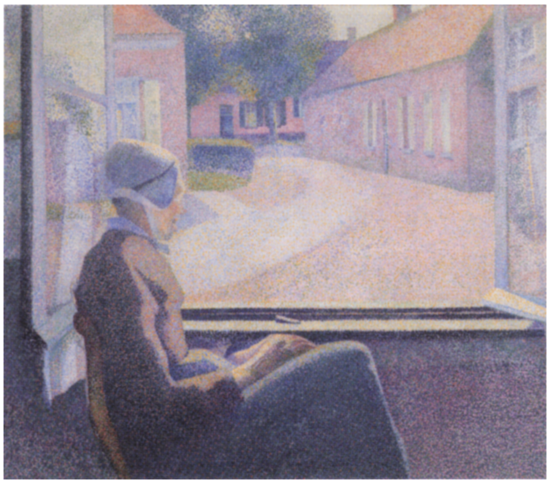
154
Max Liebermann
Dutch Lacemaker, 1881
Oil on canvas, 62.5 × 47.5 cm
Hamburger Kunsthalle

Hugo von Tschudi, to acquire Millet's late expansive landscape *November* (42), a picture that was ultimately destroyed in the Second World War.[26]

The Netherlands and Belgium

In the Netherlands, the Hague School of painters, which emerged in the 1860s, was much influenced by Millet. This school, named after the town of The Hague on the Dutch coast where the artists formed a colony, reacted against the idealized imagery of the academy and developed a deeply felt naturalism. In particular, often working *en plein air*, they represented the changing light and atmosphere of the Dutch landscape. Their interest in the output not only of Millet but also his fellow artists at Barbizon was encouraged by the avid collecting of the painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag, who developed a significant collection of the works of these French painters. The peasant genre painter Jozef Israëls was often compared to Millet and produced views of peasant life with a similar pathos.[27] The Maris brothers Matthijs, Jacob and Willem also admired the French artist, with Matthijs producing a drawing (c. 1883, Kunstmuseum Den Haag) and an etching after Millet's *The Sower*.[28] In 1875 the Hague School landscape painter Willem Roelofs painted his lyrical landscape *The Rainbow* (151), an evening view showing a sunburst across the fields after a storm. In its capturing of this moment, the work relates closely to Millet's *Spring* (150), although it is unclear if Roelofs had seen this. Certainly, though, he was familiar with the wider work of the Barbizon painter, having himself spent much time in Barbizon in the 1850s. Generally, however, the Hague School artists used a similar palette to Millet's rather than modernizing his work as such. Their output nonetheless provided an important context for Van Gogh's subsequent, more radical engagement with Millet (see the essay "Van Gogh and 'Père Millet'").

In the neighboring country of Belgium, where a considerable amount of Millet's work was in private collections, artists also responded to his work.[29] Here the critic Emile Verhaeren was a prominent apologist for Millet, writing a complimentary review of the artist's retrospective at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1887.[30] Among the most notable responses to Millet's work was that of the painter-designer Henry Van de Velde, who produced a group of Neo-Impressionist peasant paintings in the late 1880s (155), but who also offered a critique of the French artist's imagery, describing it negatively as having an "undeniable theatricality."[31]

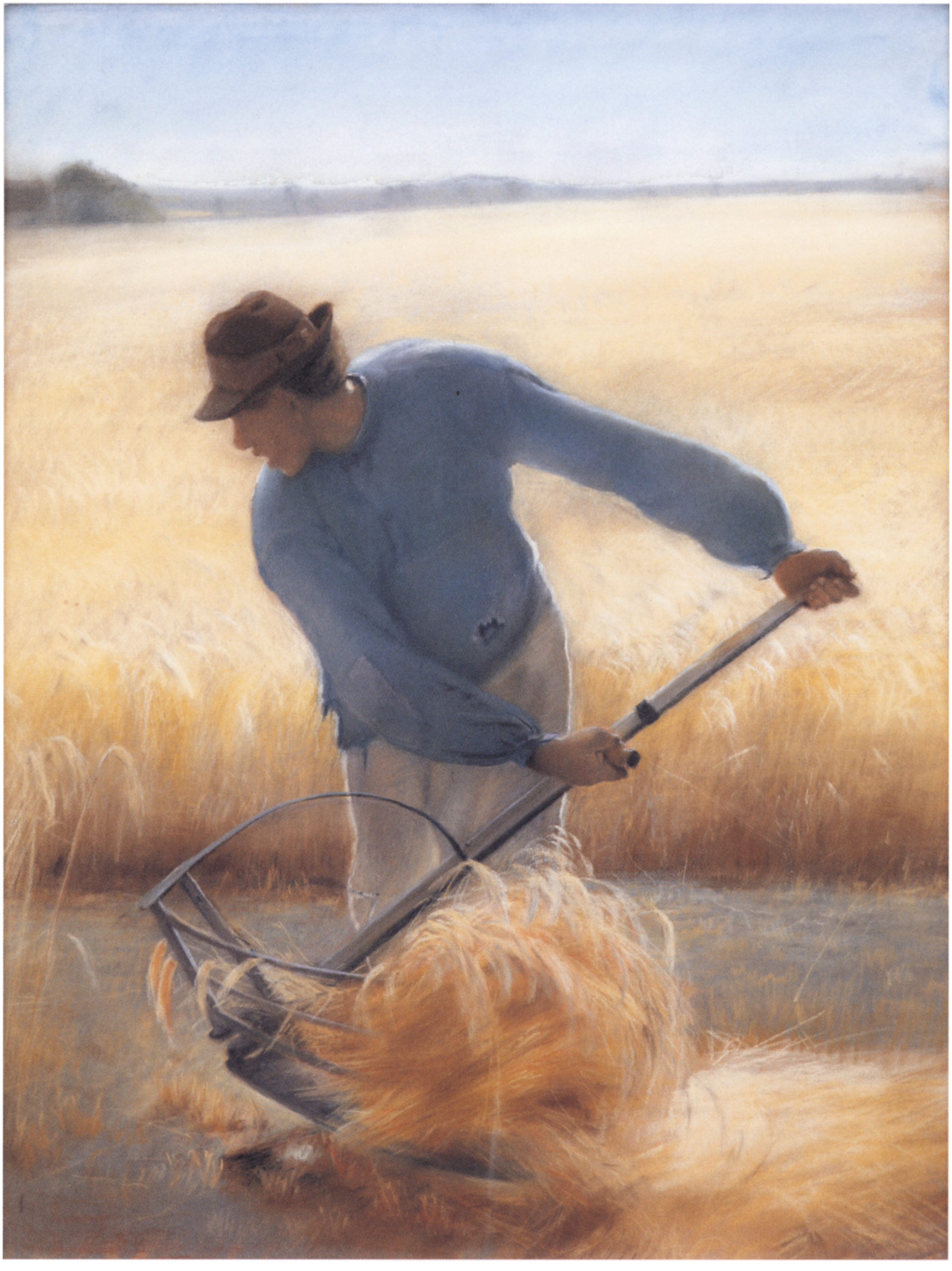


155
Henry Van de Velde
Woman Sitting by a Window, 1889
Oil on canvas, 111 × 125 cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

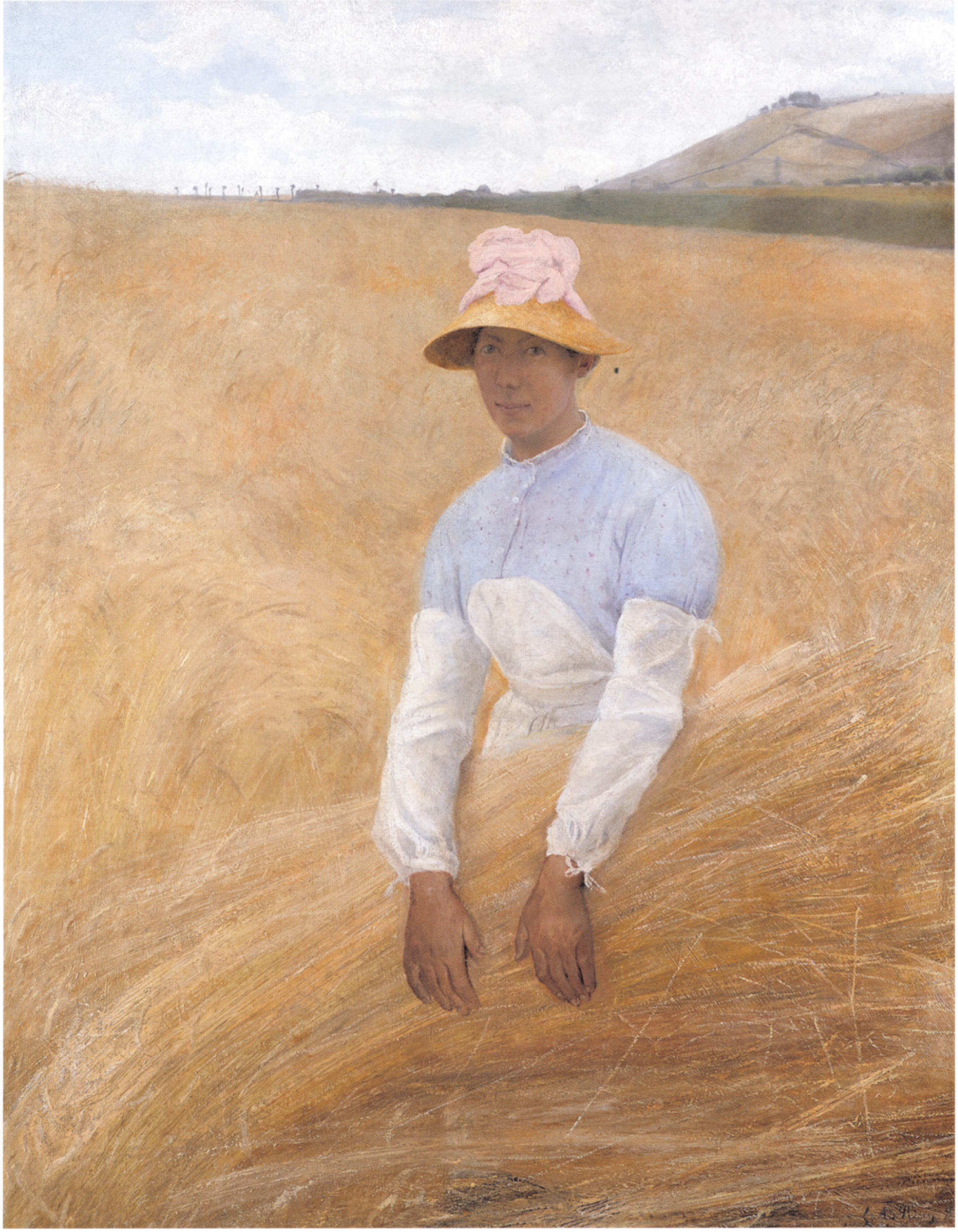
Denmark

Millet's work also impacted artists in Denmark. His work entered Danish collections early on when his major *Death and the Woodcutter* (23) was acquired by the Danish brewer Carl Jacobsen in 1878.[32] Millet's work particularly affected the artist Laurits Andersen Ring, who focused on peasant subjects for much of his career. In his youth, Ring was politically active within the Danish socialist party.[33] A later biographer described him as a "fanatic revolutionary."[34] Ring himself remembered his life in the 1880s as "the years of political agitation when I firmly believed in the revolution against Estrup."[35] His left-wing political beliefs underpinned his commitment to the rendering of rural workers. His interest in Millet was also encouraged by his close friendship with the writer Karl Madsen, who published a series of articles on Millet in 1884, popularizing the artist's work among Danish audiences.[36]

Ring's *Harvest* (156) shows a worker in a ragged shirt reaping wheat in the fields around



156
Laurits Andersen Ring
Harvest, 1886
Pastel on paper, 62 × 47.6 cm
Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr.

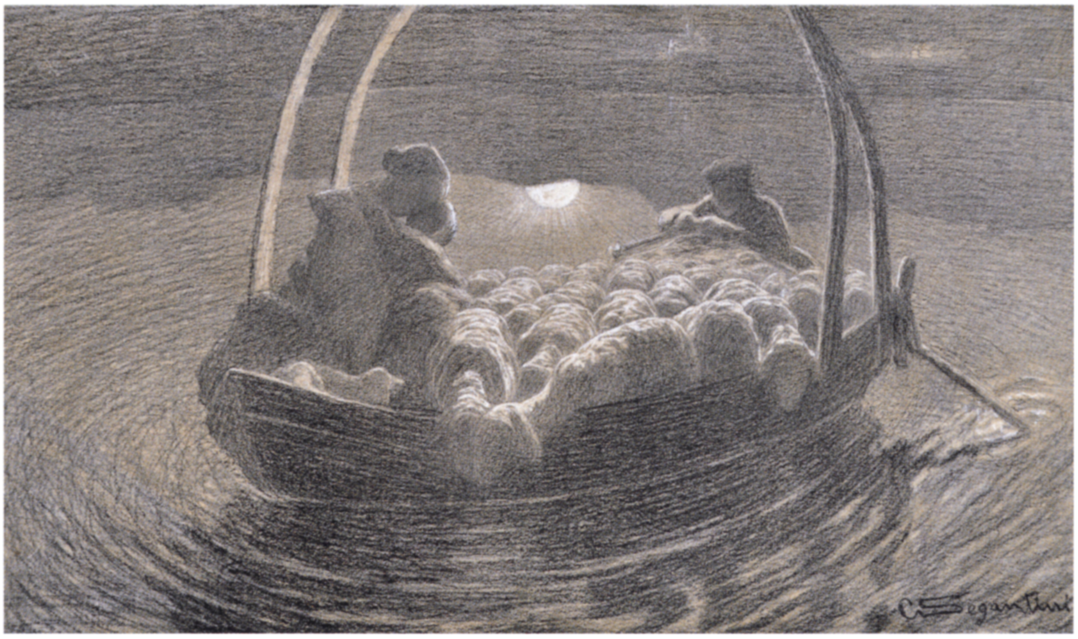


157
Laurits Andersen Ring
Harvest Girl, 1889
Oil on canvas, 120 × 92 cm
Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr.

Zealand in southern Denmark. He uses a cradled scythe, a more modern and efficient version of the scythe than that represented in Millet's imagery. In the dynamism of his pose, he embodies Ring's aspirations for revolution. This was a smaller variant of Ring's large-scale painting of the same title that won him considerable fame and was acquired by the National Gallery of Denmark in 1885. Later, in 1889, Ring produced a related work of a young female harvester in an outfit with summer hat, pink ribbon, and pale blue dress (157); she gathers a sheaf of corn in a manner that is reminiscent of the figure of Ruth in Millet's *Harvesters Resting* (19), which Ring may have known in reproduction. In *Harvest* and *Harvest Girl*, Ring chose to paint a very high horizon line, a tactic that Millet had frequently used. He continued to paint peasant themes throughout his career, earning considerable success, often with subjects such as the gleaners and sowers favored by Millet.

Italy

In Italy, innovative artists also looked to the example of Millet. Perhaps most notably, the successful painter Giovanni Segantini produced peasant images with a very similar repertoire of subjects, including shepherdesses, sowers, and cowherds. For the French art critic François Thiébault-Sisson, Segantini was an "Italian Millet."[37] Segantini never traveled outside Italy or Switzerland (where he lived from 1886) and thus did not see Millet's work at first hand. Instead, he experienced it through reproductions, particularly the prints in Sensier's biography of Millet published in 1881. Segantini was introduced to this by his friend and dealer Vittore Grubicy de Dragon. In the early 1880s the artist employed a dark palette—including bitumen (a black, tar-like substance) among his materials—that was very close to that of Millet. In the mid-1880s, however, he developed a Divisionist technique involving threaded strands of bright color. This is evident in *Rest in the*

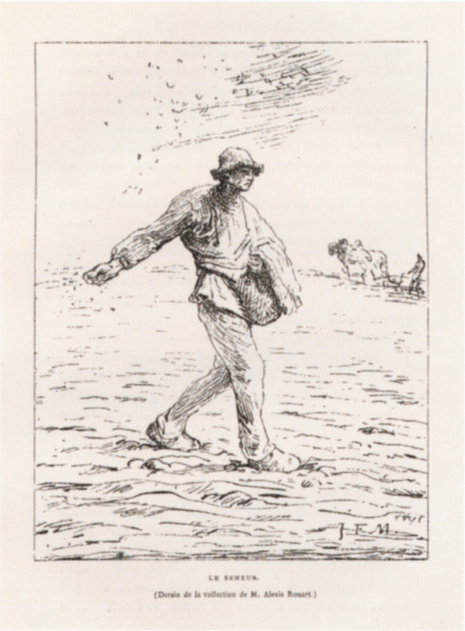


158
Giovanni Segantini
Ave Maria Crossing the Lake, 1890–92
Black Conté crayon and pencil on paperboard, 24.4 × 37.8 cm
Segantini Museum, St. Moritz

Shade (private collection), in which the artist treats the theme of the resting peasant, favored by Millet, modernizing his subject with a new technique and color palette informed by the color theory of Ogden Rood, to which he had been introduced in 1887.

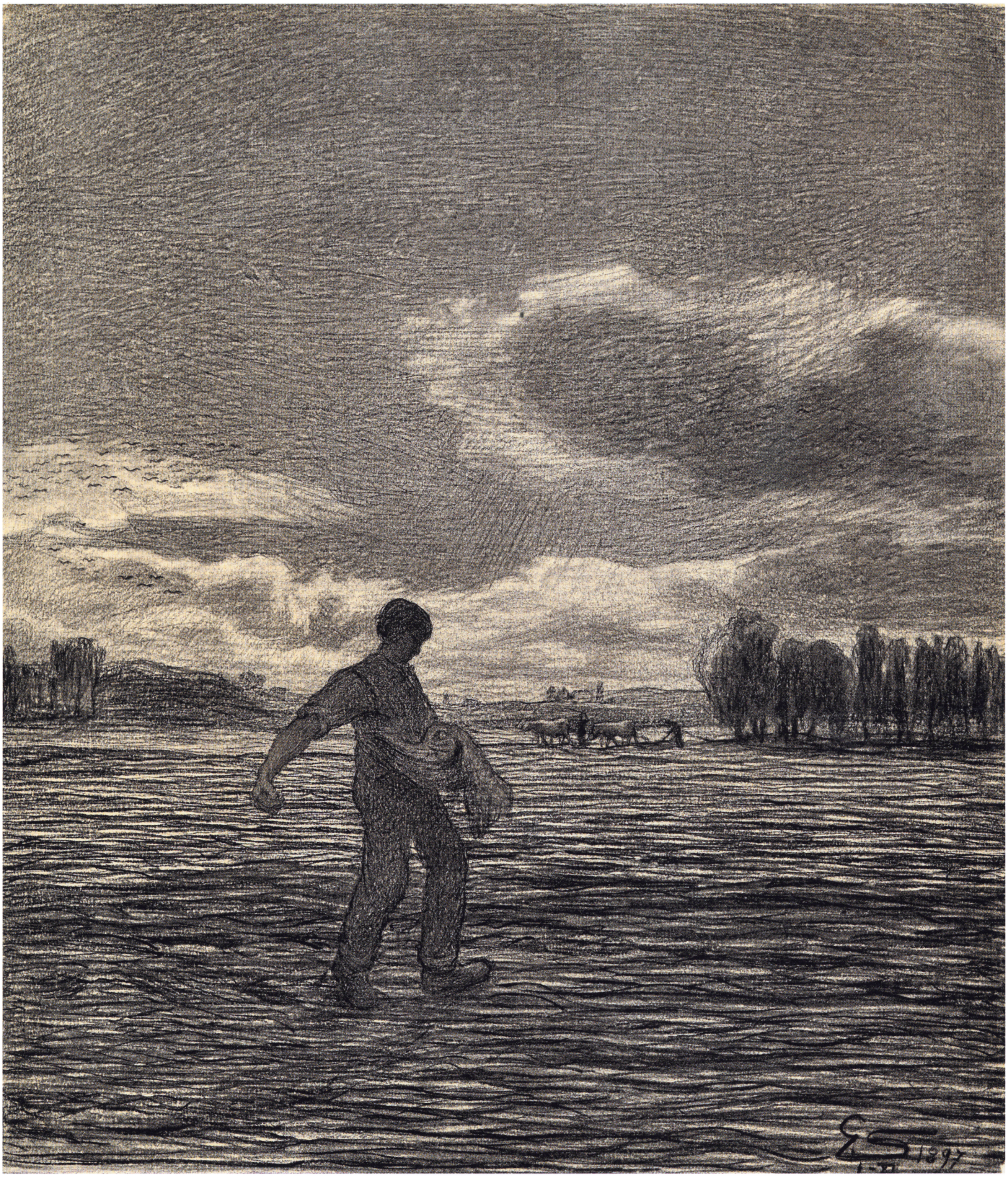
In addition to being an experimental painter, Segantini produced a large body of drawings. In their muted and tenebrous palette, these are closer to the work of Millet than Segantini's paintings. Like Millet, Segantini shared a propensity for the use of Conté crayons, and he had these specially imported from Paris.[38] The drawing *Ave Maria Crossing the Lake* (158) shows a mother and her child alongside a shepherd who rows his sheep across a lake in the Brianza.[39] These figures have stopped for a moment to say the *Ave Maria* prayer in response to the sound of bells from a distant, barely discernible church steeple. Segantini's luminous drawing, in which the sun is visible as a reflection on the surface of the water, is a horizontal variant after his painting of the same subject (167). Both works represent Segantini's personal response to Millet's famed *The Angelus* (3), where the figures also pray on hearing distant church bells. This motif was compared to Millet's work more than any other in Segantini's oeuvre.

Segantini's mastery of light is also evident in *Moonlight Effect. The Return of the Flock* (163) and the atmospheric *The Two Mothers* (162), in which the artist illustrated the universality of motherhood as a woman and a ewe take their offspring home at twilight, its glow falling on the backs of the sheep. The Swiss writer and art critic William Ritter noted of Segantini: "He has grasped as no one else has done before him, save Millet, the deep harmony which subsists between man and beast, who have been placed together on the same earth, who breathe the same air."[40] Segantini himself emphasized the spiritual dimension to his output, describing it as "an art full of serenity and repose that would dispel darkness like the sun's rays and replace it with light, life and love."[41] His empathy for the peasant classes ensured that his work also had a political undercurrent. In *The Sower* (160), Segantini's protagonist is placed in an expansive landscape illuminated by light breaking through a dramatic cloud formation. This drawing had a specific political message since it was a commission for the cover of an almanac published by the Italian Socialist Party.[42] Segantini's design is particularly close to those in Millet's later pastels of the theme (38), and the Italian artist had probably seen a related drawing that was reproduced in Sensier's biography (159).[43]

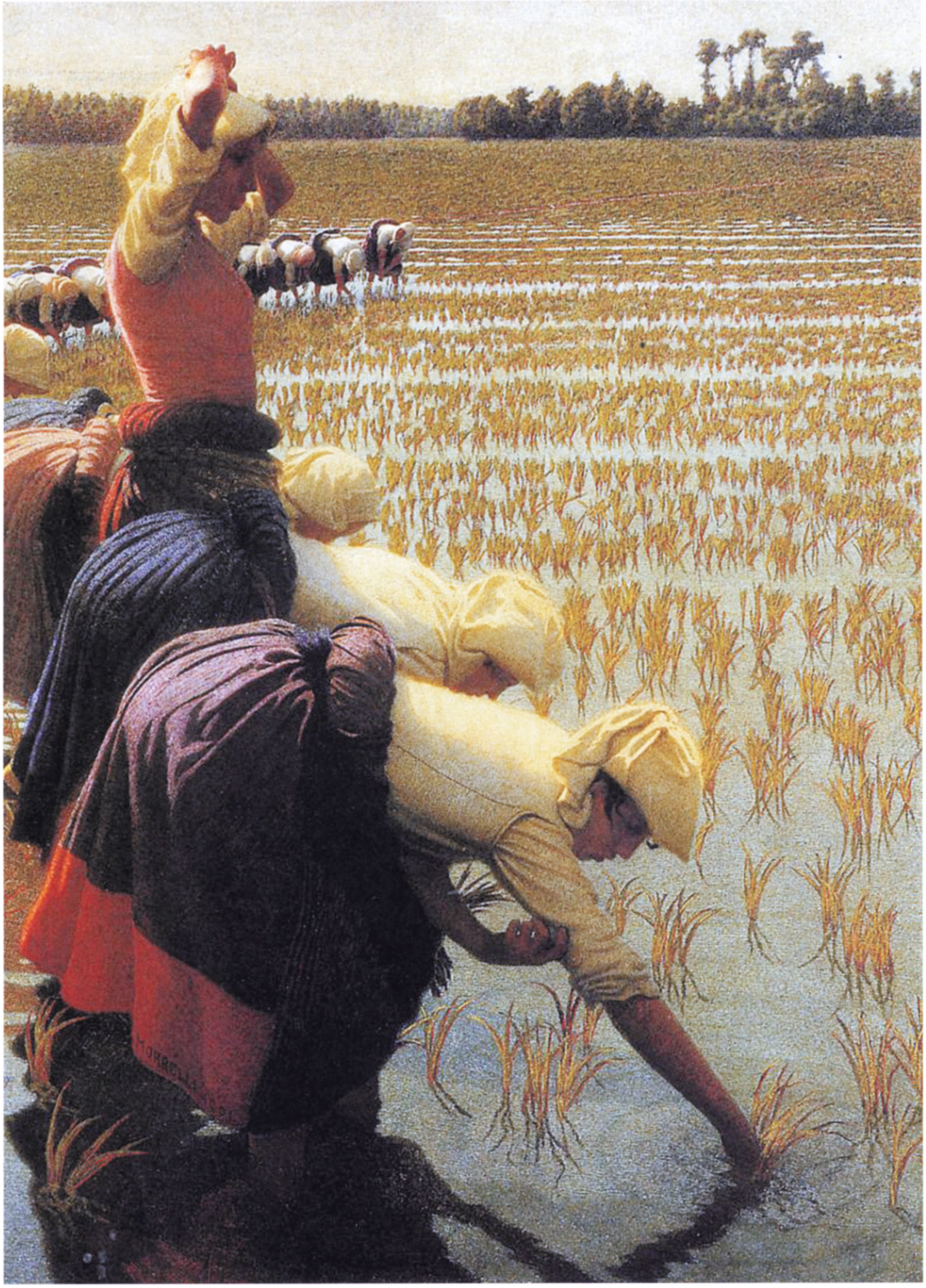

J.F.M.
LE SEMEUR.
(Dessin de la collection de M. Alexis Rouart.)

159
The Sower (after Millet)
From *La vie et l'oeuvre de J.-F. Millet*
by Alfred Sensier, Paris 1881, p. 125
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Another Italian painter, Angelo Morbelli, produced a body of work informed by Millet. Morbelli's politicized oeuvre focused on themes of labor and social hardship, both in the city and countryside. His *In the Rice Fields* (161) shows the rice workers (or *mondine*) in the paddies close to Morbelli's family home at Casale Monferrato in the Piedmont region of northern Italy. Morbelli's bending women owe an undeniable debt to Millet's *Gleaners*, which the Italian artist could have seen during his visit to the 1889 Exposition Universelle.[44] Morbelli replaces Millet's relatively muted palette with a more luminous range of tones, rendered in a Divisionist technique and informed by his study of light and color theory, particularly that of Ogden Rood.[45] Morbelli followed Rood's recommendation to juxtapose contrasting colors in order to achieve effects of heightened luminosity. Thus the yellow-green expanse of rice plants is offset by the violet of the foreground woman's

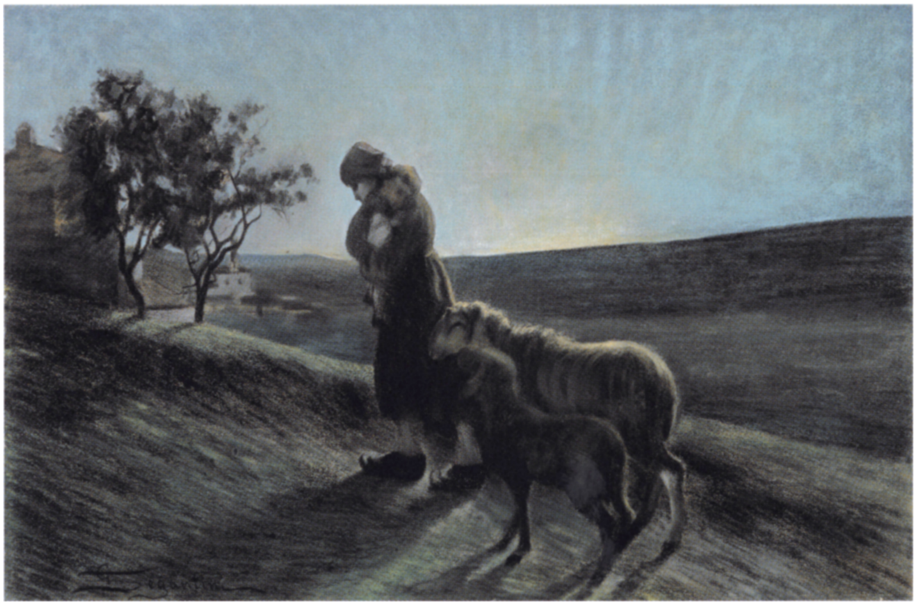


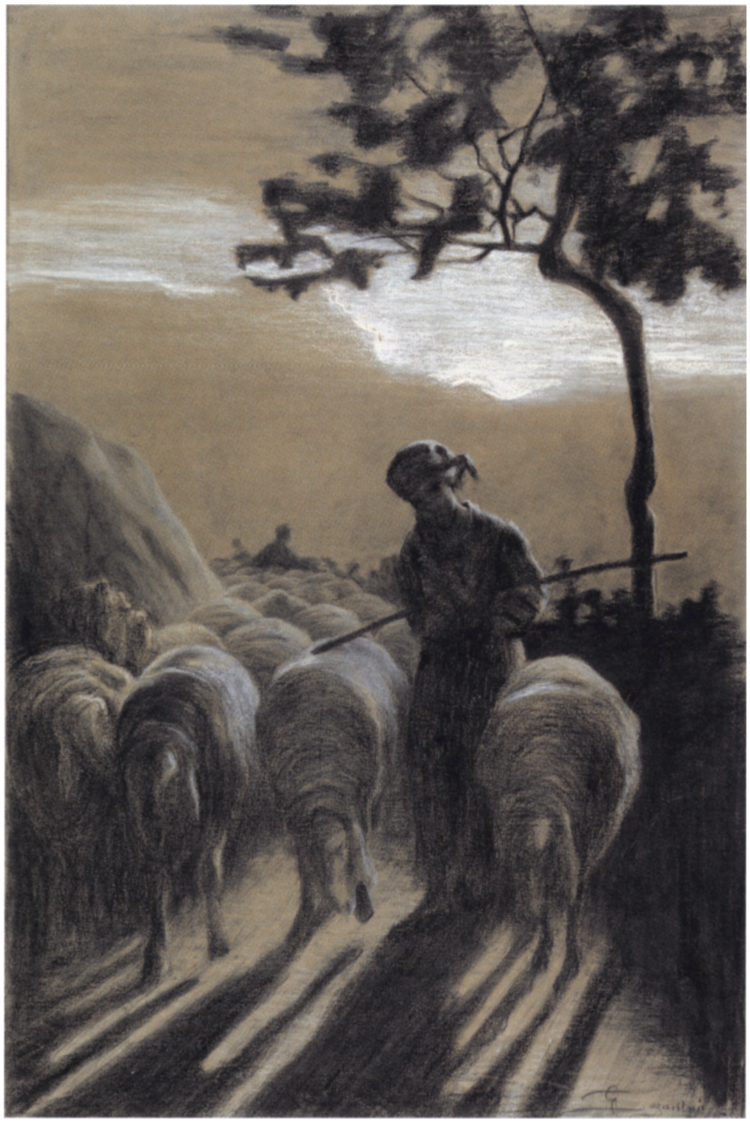
160
Giovanni Segantini
The Sower, 1897
Conté crayon and black crayon on paper,
59.5 × 51.5 cm
Segantini Museum, St. Moritz



161
Angelo Morbelli
In the Rice Fields, 1901
Oil on canvas, 182.9 × 130.2 cm
Private collection

162
Giovanni Segantini
The Two Mothers, 1884–86
Pastel and gouache on paper, 57 × 87 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague



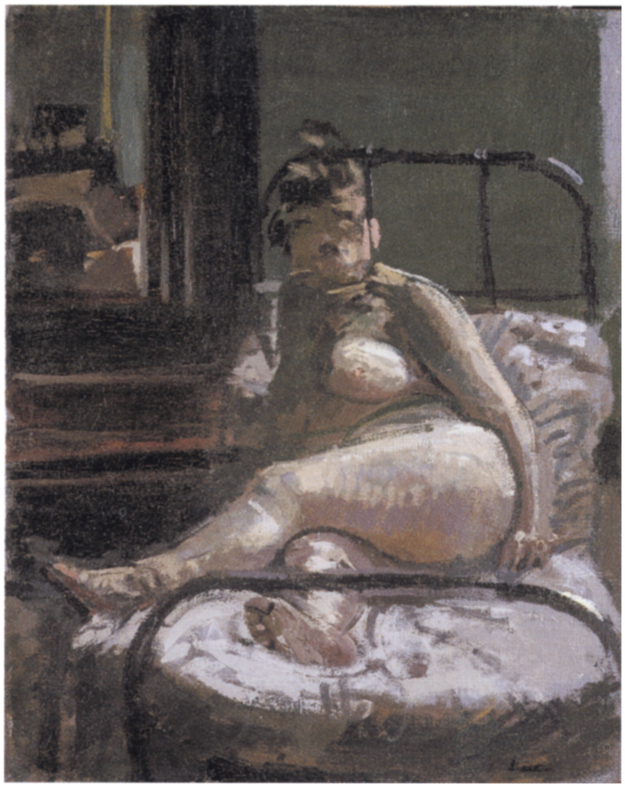


163
Giovanni Segantini
Moonlight Effect. The Return of the Flock, 1883–84
Black and white chalk and charcoal on paper, 78 × 52 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

skirt.[46] For all its color, Morbelli's work emphasized the backbreaking toil of the women and carried a message of social critique. He entitled an earlier version of the picture *For Eighty Cents!* (*Per ottanta centesimi!*; 1895–97 Museo Borgogna, Vercelli), referencing the poor wages of these seasonal workers whose plight was exacerbated by an agricultural crisis of the early 1890s.[47]

England and Scotland

Millet's work had entered English and Scottish collections by the late nineteenth century, and he certainly influenced the output of English naturalist painters like George Clausen. Among the avant-garde, his work had perhaps the greatest impact on Walter Sickert, who was a lifelong supporter of his work. Sickert wrote extensively and with the highest praise of Millet's work from the early 1890s through to the 1920s.[48] As with Degas, his own views of modern urban labor can be seen as an updating of Millet's rural themes. Sickert wrote of his interest in the "recurring monotone of peasant labor" and aspired to translate Millet's approach to the setting of London, and specifically the working-class area around Mornington Crescent in Camden.[49] He noted, "In studying town interiors, I am doing in kind exactly what Millet would have done had he lived in London. Camden Town has been my Barbizon."[50] One related view, *La Hollandaise*, highlights Sickert's approach (164). Here he represents a somber bedroom setting with a woman who may be a prostitute.



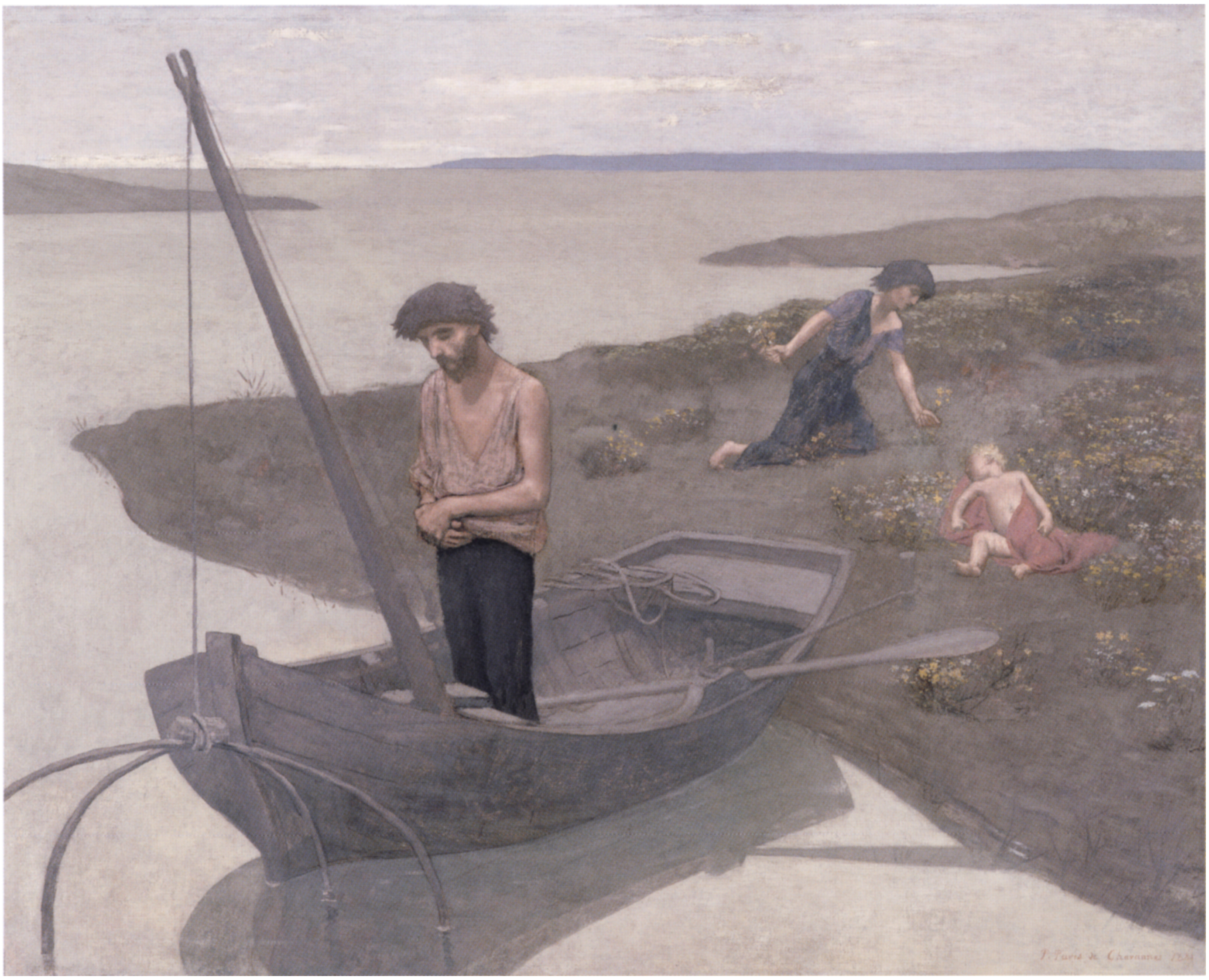
164
Walter Sickert
La Hollandaise, c. 1906
Oil on canvas, 51.1 × 40.6 cm
Tate Britain, London

A Global Painter

Millet's impact ensured that he became truly a global painter in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In a sense, this was paradoxical for an artist who lived his whole life in France, only briefly leaving his homeland for a short visit to Switzerland in 1868. Other artists associated with Millet, like Gustave Courbet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, also inspired international emulation. Yet the global appeal of Millet's work was perhaps exceptional, in part because of the preeminence of his position in the market and the related remarkable dissemination of key images like *The Angelus* into popular culture. Millet's oeuvre not only influenced the international community of artists discussed above in western Europe and North America but also affected artists in the late nineteenth century in Japan, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Argentina.[51] The reasons for this success were varied, as we have seen, ranging from Inness's quasi-transcendentalist attraction to his work to the more politicized engagement of artists like Liebermann, Ring, and Morbelli. Such differing responses from such a diverse body of artists were indeed testament to the multifaceted nature of Millet's output. The interpretations of his admirers, produced far from Barbizon, highlighted the artist's ability to create works that could inspire a global community.

Exalted and Monumental: Appreciation of Millet around 1900

Maite van Dijk



165
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
The Poor Fisherman, 1881
Oil on canvas, 154.7 × 192.5 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

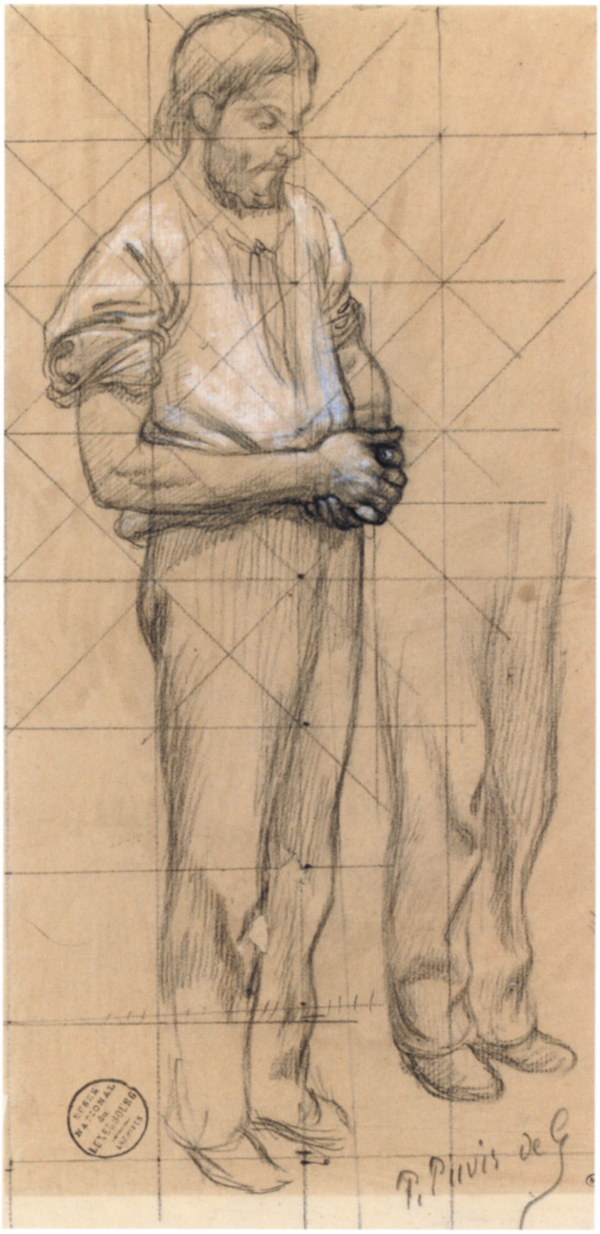
Jean-François Millet is chiefly classified nowadays as a realistic peasant painter and a co-founder of the Barbizon School. He has been largely forgotten by the public at large, at least outside France, and his art tends to be viewed as traditional rather than as modern or progressive. The art-historical canon was rewritten along modernist lines after 1900, with the result that Millet's legacy swiftly faded from memory or even came to be disparaged. In 1931, for instance, the important British critic Clive Bell described him as a "greatly gifted prig [...] afflicted with that sad disease of self-righteous sentimentality which renders the sufferer, no matter how gifted, incapable of producing a satisfactory work of art."[1] A few decades earlier, Millet had been celebrated for conveying universal emotions in everyday scenes. Now, Bell's formalist approach led him to dismiss the artist as sentimental, and hence as kitsch. Yet even though modernist art criticism slowly but surely pushed Millet aside, he continued to inspire artists in the early part of the twentieth century. His oeuvre resonated in the work of artists as varied as Edvard Munch, Jan Toorop, Ferdinand Hodler, Albin Egger-Lienz, Kazimir Malevich, Salvador Dalí, and Pablo Picasso, as this essay will explore.

Artistic Inspiration

Millet's anti-academic technique came in for frequent criticism during his lifetime, but it was this very aspect of his work that would be embraced by young, progressive artists and critics after his death in 1875 as one of his most important contributions to modern art. This applied in particular to his innovative and expressive use of Conté and pastel crayons, strong contours, and abstracted forms, which lent Millet's paintings and drawings a monumental character,[2] in turn allowing him to transcend everyday reality and give his work a greater symbolic and synthetic value. Millet's approach to landscape and the intrinsic connection between human beings and nature that he visualized in his work resonated powerfully with later generations of artists. Symbolist painters as well as the German Expressionists admired his perception of nature, which they detected not only in his art but also in his personality.

This biographical element was very important to the appreciation of Millet's oeuvre at the end of the nineteenth century, when writers and critics emphasized the direct link between his life and his art more so than they did for other artists. He was viewed as a man of simple origins who had led a sober and humble life driven by an immense compassion for an impoverished rural population. Alfred Sensier's hugely popular biography, published in 1881, set the tone for Millet's mythologization both in France and far beyond. Countless artists, writers, and critics based their image of Millet's life and work on the book, which centered on his honest depiction of peasant life.[3] Taking their cue from Sensier, they believed that Millet had understood and empathized with rural existence on both a personal and artistic level, enabling him to create a profoundly human oeuvre. It was an image in keeping with the artist's own ambitions, as he told Sensier in 1851: "it is the human side, the frankly human side, that touches me most in art."[4]

Millet's depictions of poor peasants were often framed in revolutionary and socially critical terms during his lifetime, but after his death, attention shifted firmly to his humanist view of life.[5] This interpretation became the cornerstone of his international reputation and resonated in the substantial body of art criticism and books published at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, and even Argentina.[6] Artists, too, related to Millet's depiction of human existence. For some of them, not only was his humanist approach immensely important, but so too was the religious or spiritual sense that his work expressed. His peasants were seen to have a biblical dignity, and his actual Bible scenes were frequently rendered in a down-to-earth, everyday manner.[7] Millet had turned Christian *caritas* into a prosaic form of mutual compassion, and this approach continued to reverberate for a long time.[8] It is no coincidence that *The Angelus*, with all its rustic and religious connotations, proved such a rich source of inspiration for modern artists well into the twentieth century.



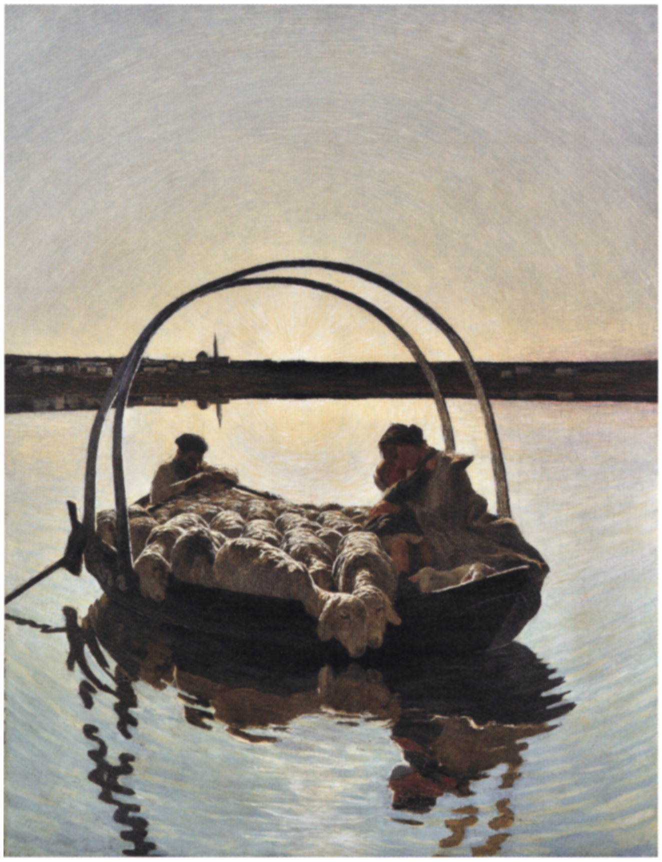
166
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
Man turned three quarters to the right, his hands crossed over his belt. Study of his trousers, c. 1881
Black crayon on paper, 36.6 × 19.9 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du Louvre, Paris

Echoes of *The Angelus*

The story of Millet's *Angelus* (3) in the years after the artist's death is an eventful one.[9] Having been sold to an American collector in 1889, the iconic painting was "repurchased" a year later for the then spectacular sum of 750,000 francs by the French department store magnate Alfred Chauchard. The sale triggered an international debate on the commercialization of the art world, while further fueling the universal myth of the misunderstood artist. Whereas Millet had supposedly spent a lifetime toiling at his art for little reward, barely fifteen years after his death a painting by him became one of the most expensive works ever to change hands. Chauchard bequeathed *The Angelus* to the Louvre in 1909, after which it was permanently accessible to the public. By the standards of the time the painting was already widely disseminated in print form, and it had been reproduced on countless occasions in newspapers, magazines, and books.

The painting combines several important elements significant to the international posthumous appreciation of Millet's work. Its title refers to the Angelus bell, rung as a call to prayer at the end of the working day, yet the church is an insignificant structure on the horizon as the peasants express their faith in a personal and natural way. They are presented as pious and humble, with immense dignity in their simplicity. The scene is simultaneously earthly and religious, intimate, and universal. Artists and critics admired the grand, all-encompassing feeling symbolized by these two simple rural workers. *The Angelus* proved the most inspiring to other artists of all Millet's paintings.

One of the earliest examples of this inspiration is provided by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, who might have seen the work in 1878 at the Durand-Ruel gallery in Paris.[10] He produced his first sketches for his painting *The Poor Fisherman* (165) in 1878. Like Millet, he imbued a seemingly everyday scene with a religious charge, in which faith is presented as a personal experience. The relationship between the man, the kneeling girl, and the baby is enigmatic, but the allusion to Christ in the figure of the fisherman is plain. Puvis de Chavannes took the man's humble stance and pious hand gesture directly from the peasant in Millet's painting. In a few other

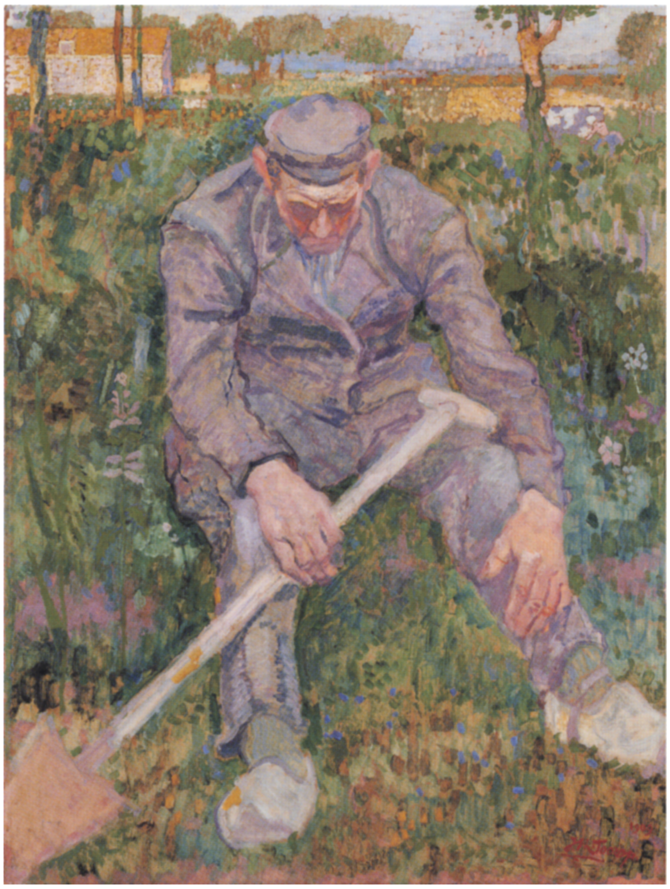


167
Giovanni Segantini
Ave Maria Crossing the Lake, 1882
Oil on canvas, 120 × 93 cm
Segantini Museum, St. Moritz (on permanent loan from the Otto Fischbacher Giovanni Segantini Foundation)

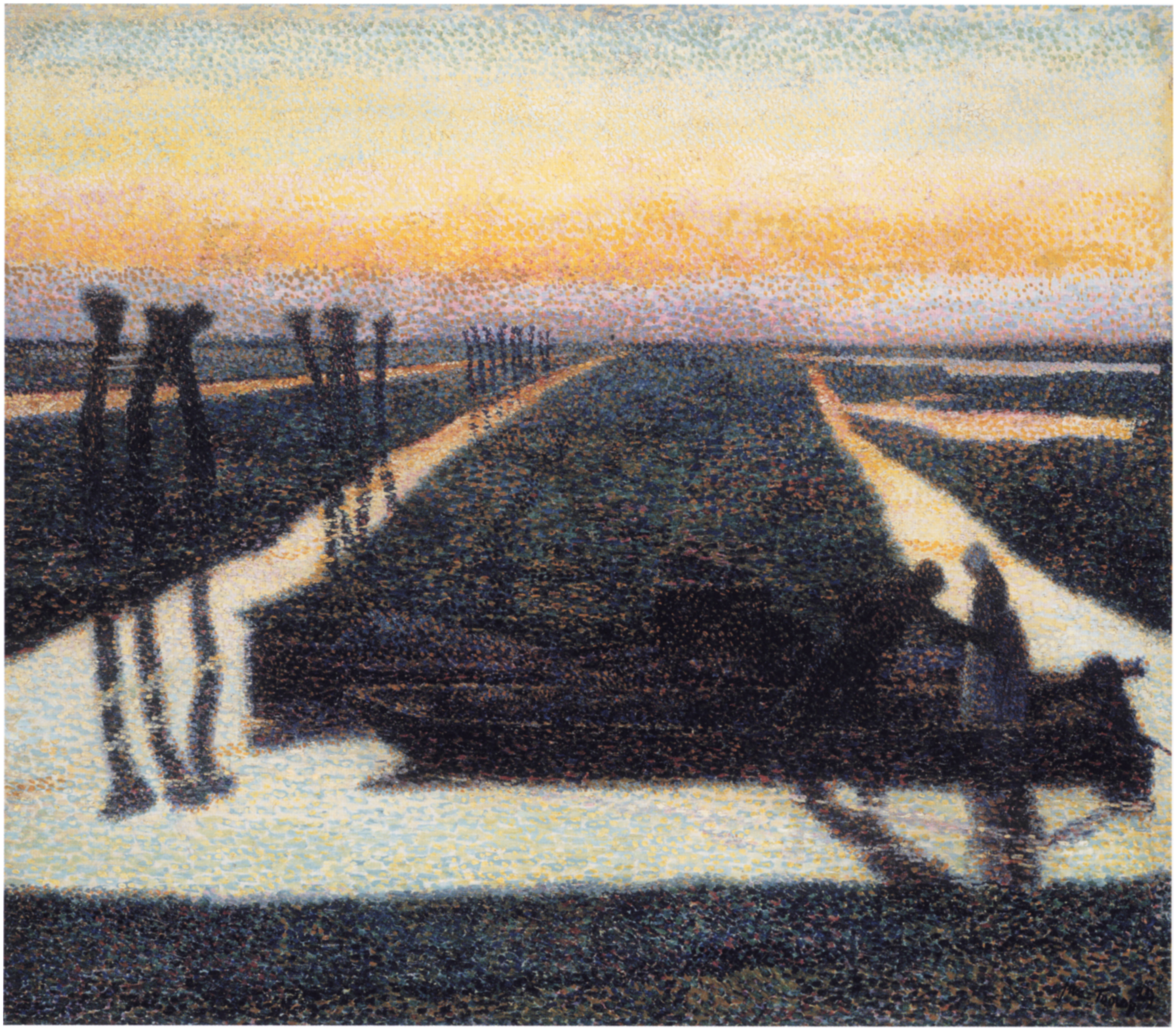
sketches for the work, he actually borrowed the clothes of Millet's peasant, making the resemblance even more striking (166).[11]

The Swiss artist Giovanni Segantini was familiar with Millet's life and work through Sensier's biography, which his friend the artist and merchant Vittore Grubicy de Dragon had given him. He painted *Ave Maria Crossing the Lake* (167) in 1882. As in Millet's painting, the people on the boat respond to the sound of the bells as it carries across the fields, yet the place of worship is not the church on the horizon but nature itself, with which they are in total harmony. For both artists, a personal relationship with God was more important than the Church as an institution.[12] There were parallels not only between the work of Segantini and Millet but between their lives: Segantini was also a nature lover, a hard worker, and a family man who had similarly exchanged life in the city for the unspoiled countryside.

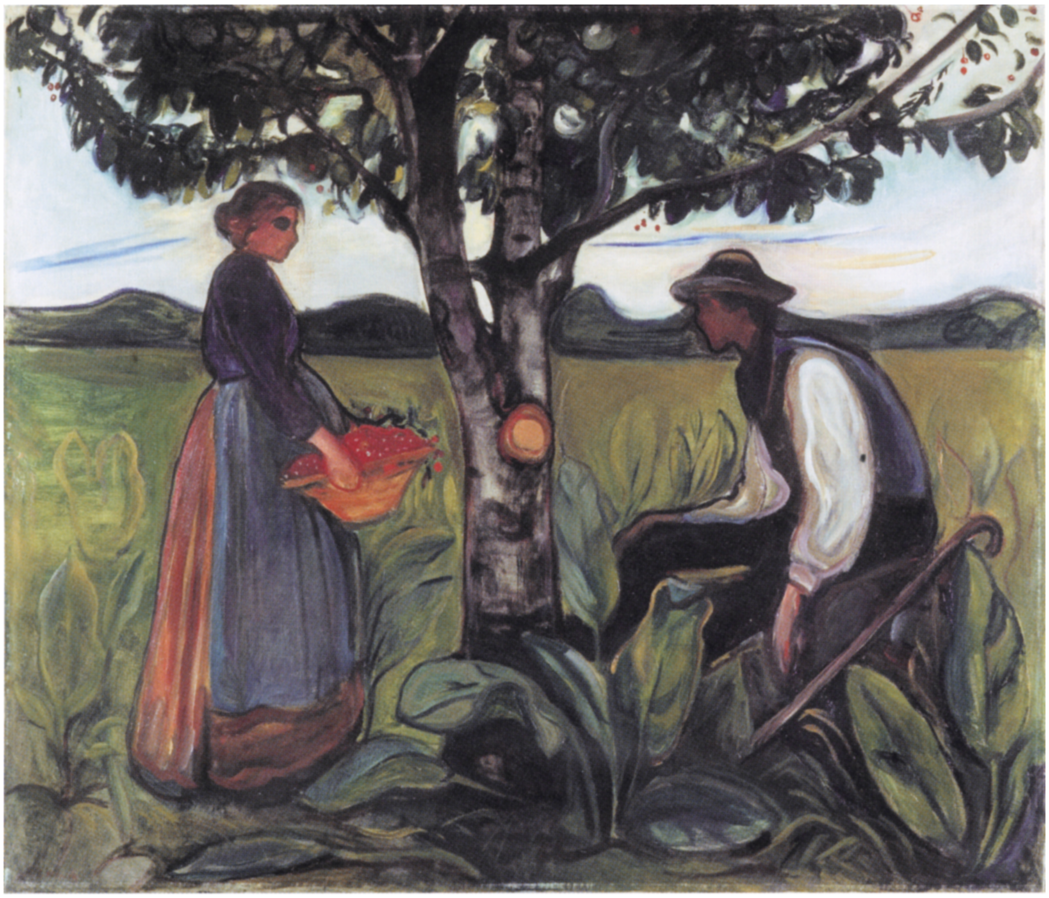
The symbolic, spiritual charge of *The Angelus* also caught the imagination of Jan Toorop. His 1889 painting *Broek in Waterland* (169) shows an expansive, misty meadow landscape with a peasant couple in a small boat in the right foreground. It is not clear whether they are praying, but the serene evening mood unmistakably recalls Millet's famous work. About a year earlier, Toorop had painted an image of a peasant digging, with his wife resting in a wheelbarrow behind him, a child in her lap. The wheelbarrow is a direct visual reference to the one behind the woman in Millet's *Angelus*. Toorop's robust laborer occupies a significant portion of the scene while the orange evening light glows on the high horizon. The monumentality that Toorop gave his rural figures, following Millet's example, is also found in his *Resting Peasant* of 1909 (168).



168
Jan Toorop
Resting Peasant, 1909
Oil on panel, 110 × 75 cm
Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen (acquired with support of Vereniging Rembrandt and Vereniging Vrienden van Museum Het Valkhof)



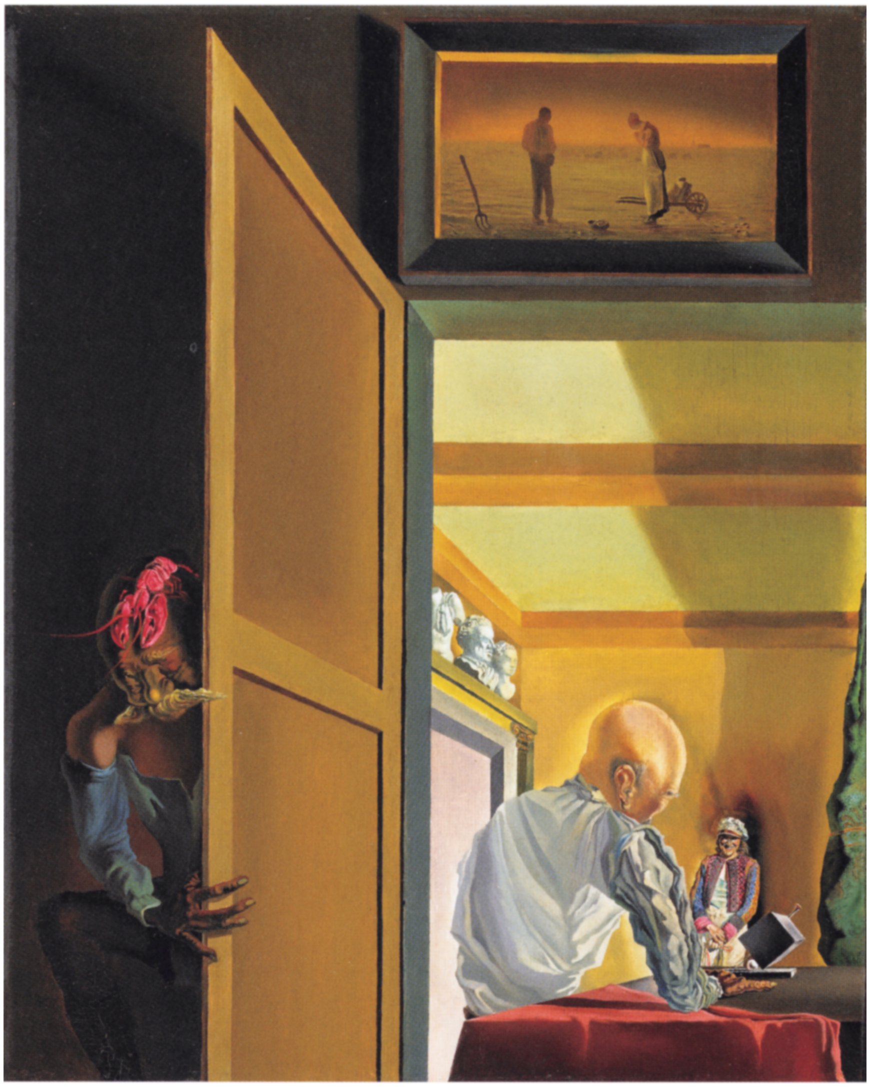
169
Jan Toorop
Broek in Waterland, 1889
Oil on canvas, 68.6 × 76.2 cm
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Newfields
(gift in memory of Robert S. Ashby by
his family and friends)



170
Edvard Munch
Fertility, 1899–1900
Oil on canvas, 120 × 140 cm
Canica Art Collection, Oslo (on long-term loan to the Van Gogh Museum)

Where Puvis de Chavannes, Segantini, and Toorop drew fairly literal inspiration from *The Angelus*, Edvard Munch translated Millet's symbolism more freely. His appreciation for the Frenchman's work probably came via his friend Julius Meier-Graefe, an influential critic who described Millet's monumental drawing—from which he drew associations with Van Gogh's decorative lines—in his 1899 article "Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics."[13] Interestingly, a significant change occurred in Munch's work in this same period, with his subject matter becoming less and less explicitly psychological and confrontational. Landscape and nature assumed a more central role, as is clearly apparent in *Fertility* of 1899–1900 (170). Munch's painting reflects Meier-Graefe's view that the future of modern art lay in the tradition of Millet and Van Gogh. *Fertility* seems to refer to Millet's symbolic vision of nature as well as his formal language, Munch's rural couple being shown in a similar state of harmony with nature and the land as their counterparts in *The Angelus*. For Munch, too, the spiritual significance of his painting was symbolized by the unity between human beings and nature, with a focus on fertility and the cycle of life.[14]

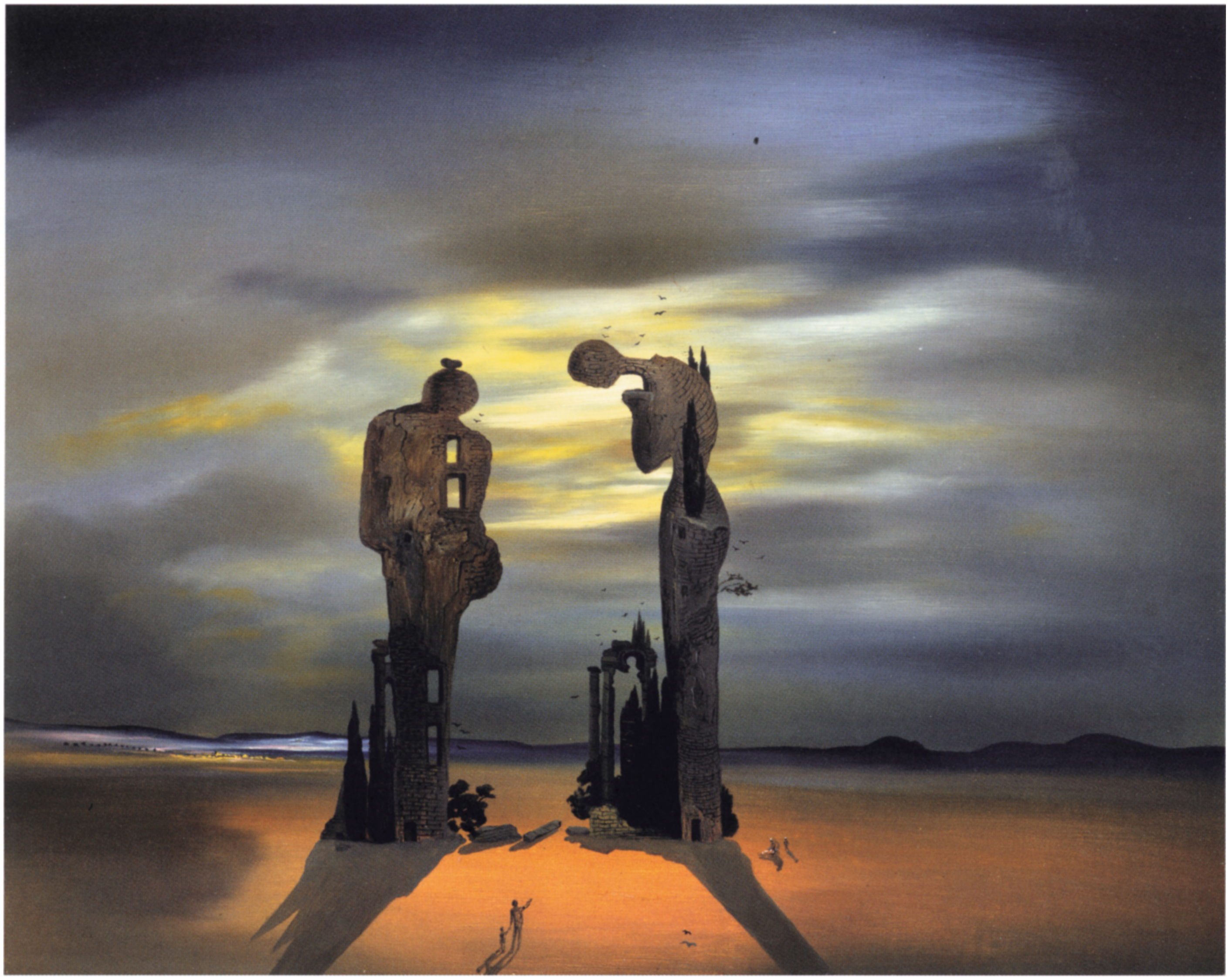
In the 1930s, *The Angelus* became something of an obsession for Salvador Dalí, whose paintings, objects, and poems contain numerous references to Millet's painting—in some cases literally (171) and in others through its transformation into typically Daliesque forms (172). In early 1930, Dalí wrote a book entitled *The Tragic Myth of Millet's "Angelus"*,[15] a psychoanalytical text that he himself regarded as one of the fundamental documents of his philosophy. In it, he declared that Millet's painting held an



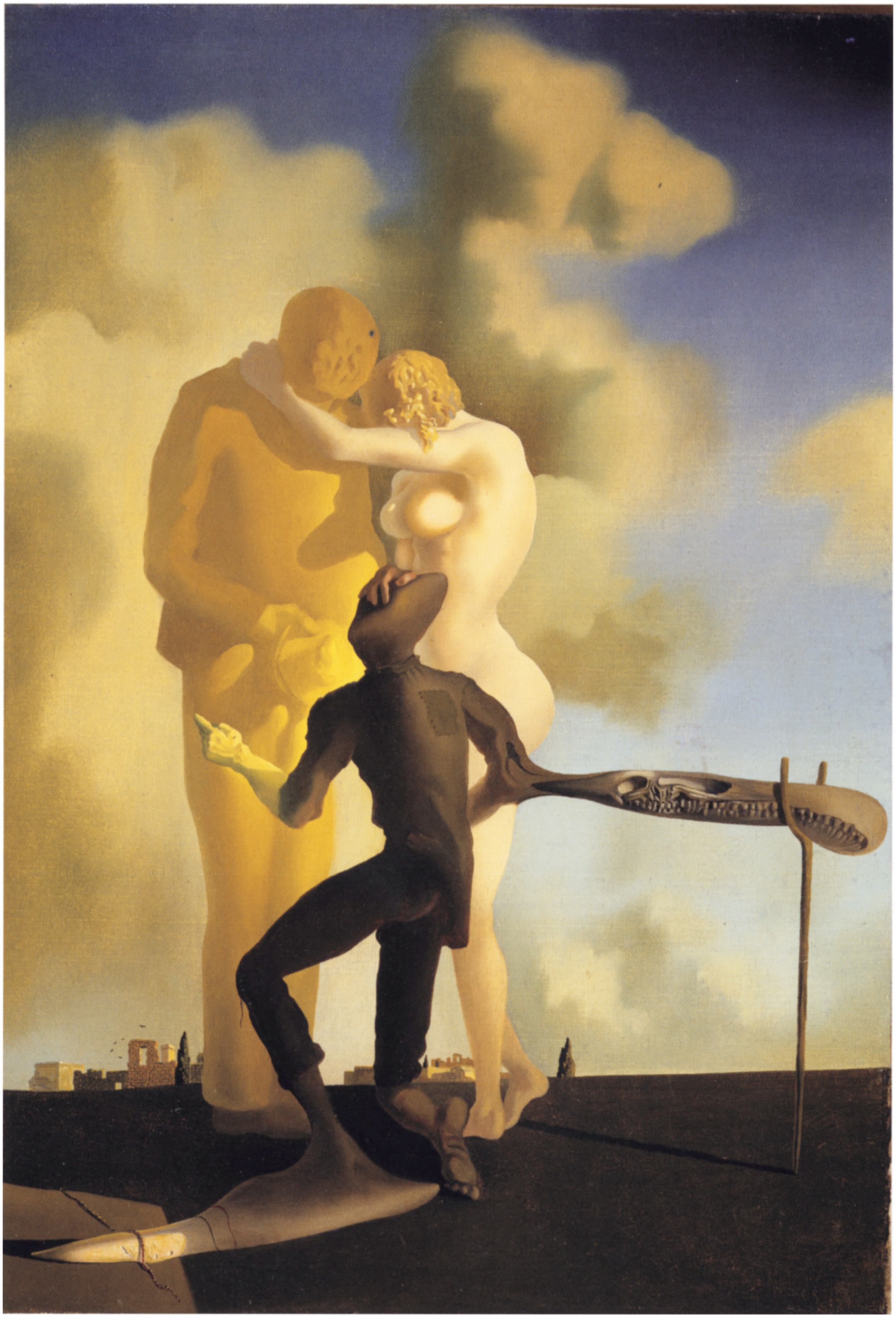
171
Salvador Dalí
Gala and the Angelus of Millet Immediately Preceding the Arrival of the Conic Anamorphoses, 1933
Oil on panel, 24.2 × 19.2 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

erotic significance for him and that it represented his deepest anxieties and obsessions, which were "centered around mothers devouring their sons in a form of sexual cannibalism."[16] His paranoiac interpretation of the pious image focused on eroticism and extinction, with disguised sexual repression—by the predatory, dominant female—and violence forming the central theme. Dalí transformed Millet's couple in many different ways: as giants, with a naked *femme fatale* (173), or even as stones or huge brick ruins (172). In Dalí's interpretations of *The Angelus*, the woman is about to devour the male after copulation. The wheelbarrow plays an important part in Dalí's symbolism, and this is especially clear in his small, realistically painted *Portrait of Gala* (174). Gala, Dalí's wife, is depicted twice, as if looking at her own double, yet the women are not identical. The Gala who faces the viewer is sitting on a wheelbarrow, as are the rural couple in the painting that hangs on the wall behind her, itself a free copy by Dalí of Millet's work. Dalí believed that farmers eroticized their working tools, transforming wheelbarrows and other objects into fetishes.[17] Both Gala and the farmers are seated, and the disguised erotic violence which Dalí perceived in *The Angelus* is transferred to a sexually aggressive Gala.

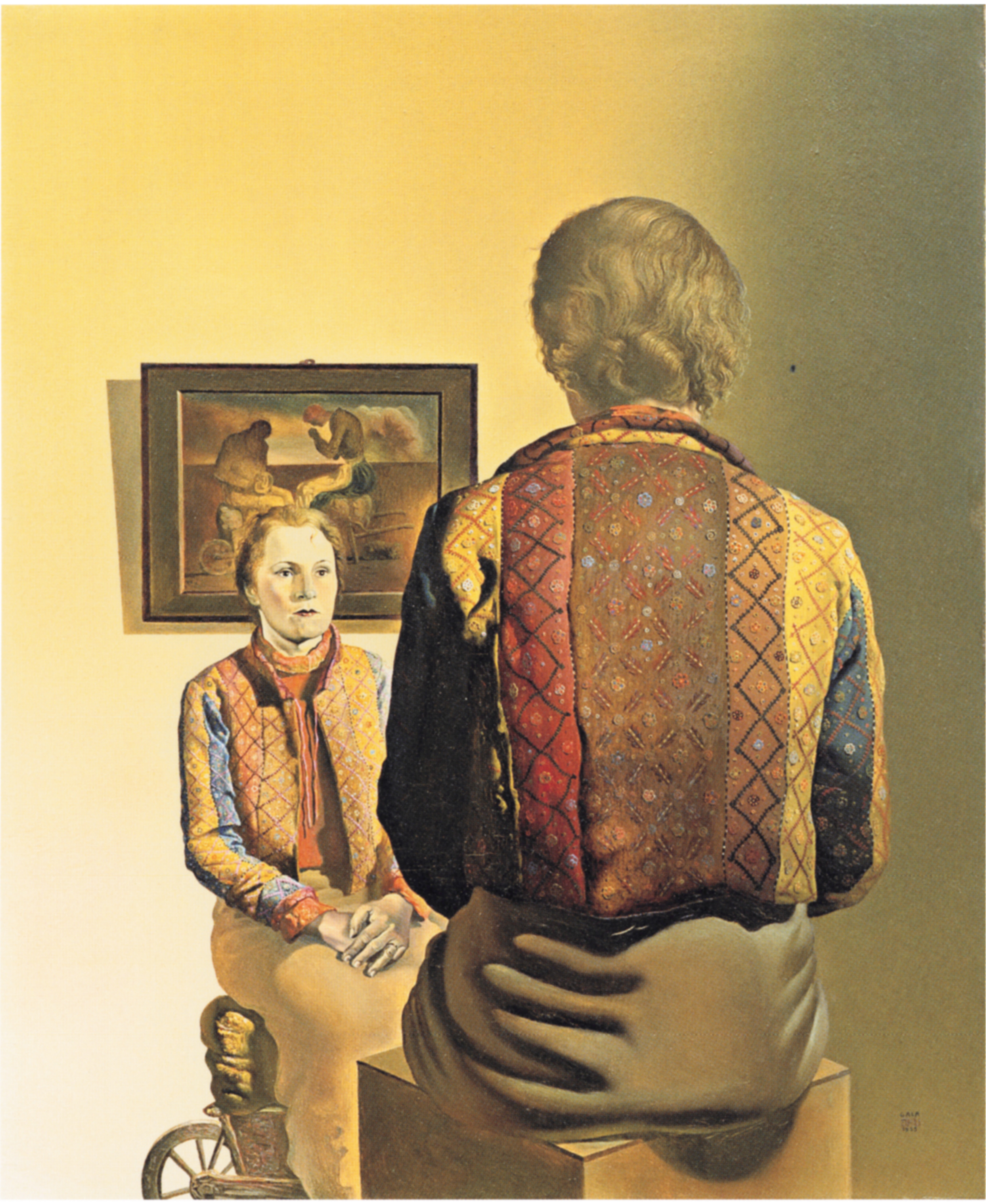
Dalí's fascination with *The Angelus* first arose, he said, while at Catholic school, where a reproduction of the work hung in the classroom: "This painting produced in me an obscure anguish, so poignant that the memory of those two motionless silhouettes pursued me for several years."[18] Millet's peasant couple took on numerous different forms and meanings in Dalí's Surrealist art. He placed them in new, fantastic contexts, transforming and deconstructing Millet's pious



172
Salvador Dalí
Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus, c. 1934
Oil on panel, 31.8 × 39.4 cm
The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida
(gift of A. Reynolds and Eleanor Morse)



173
Salvador Dalí
Meditation on the Harp, c. 1933
Oil on canvas, 66.7 × 47 cm
The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida
(gift of A. Reynolds and Eleanor Morse)



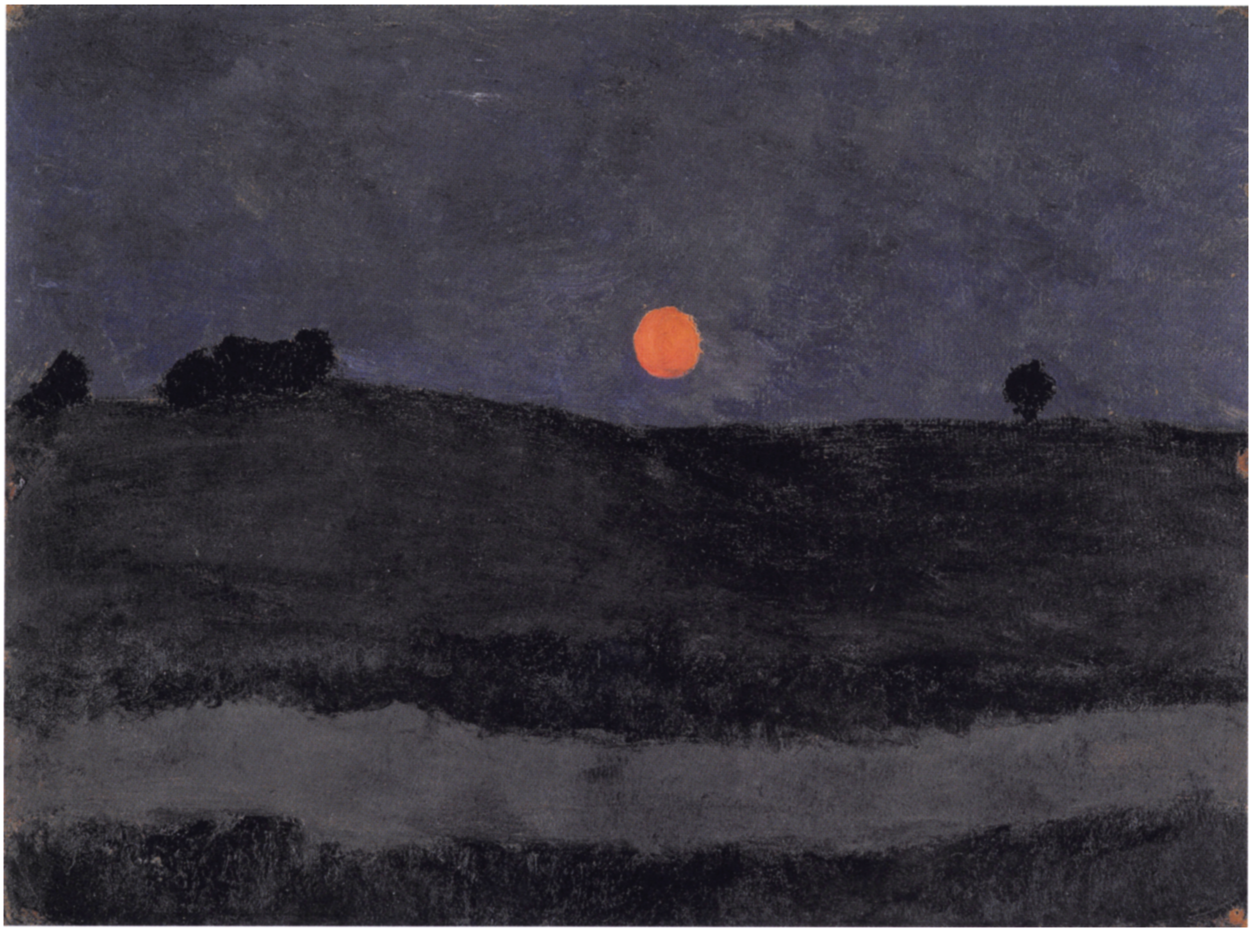
174
Salvador Dalí
Portrait of Gala, 1935
Oil on panel, 32.4 × 26.7 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
(gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller)

and tranquil scene. By freely paraphrasing someone else's work, he questioned the mechanisms of inspiration and artistic influence and placed Millet's legacy in an entirely new light.

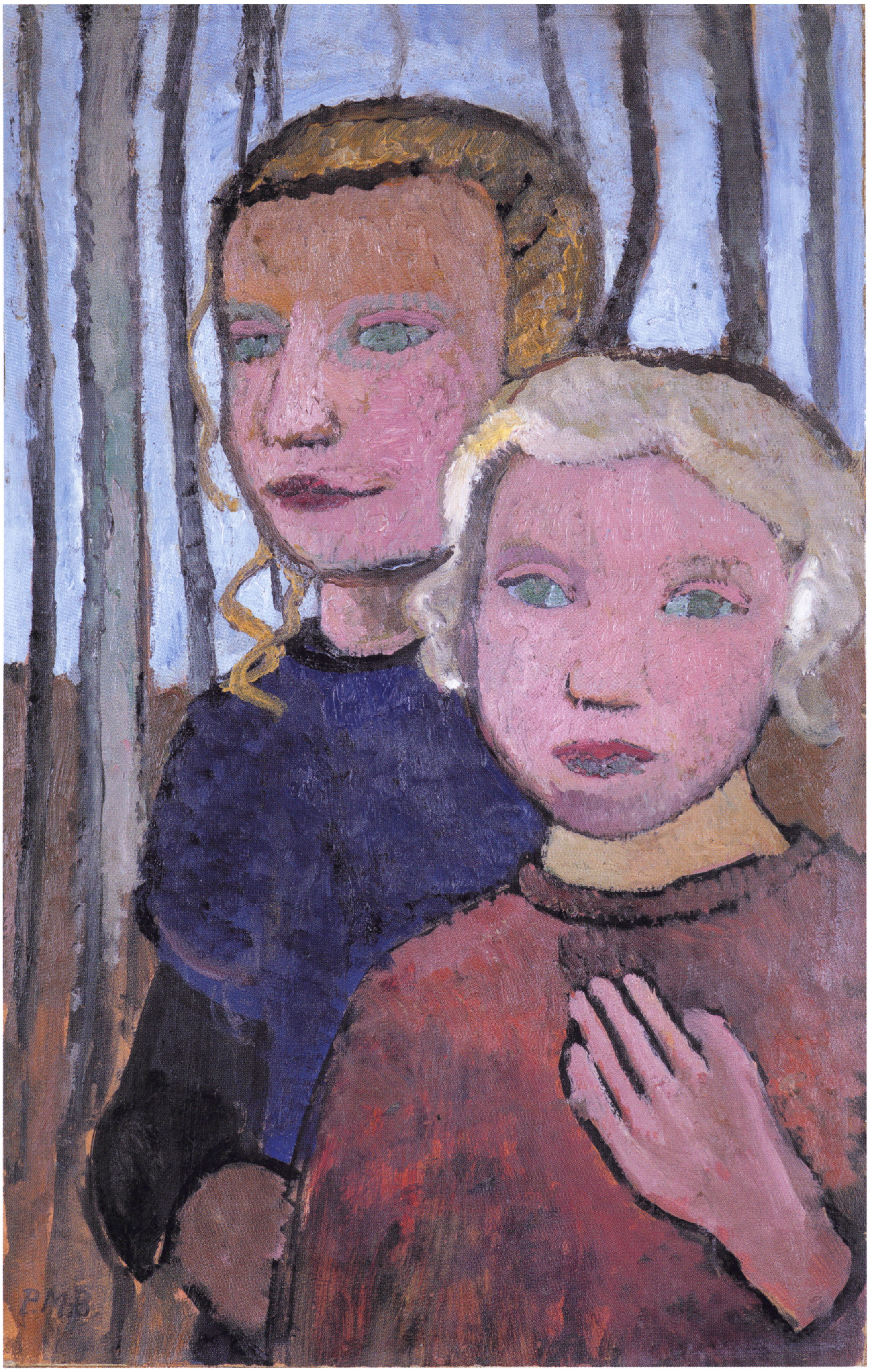
The Germanic Millet

The appreciation of Millet in the early twentieth century extended beyond *The Angelus*, however. After his death, his paintings and drawings became widely known outside France, too, with artistic and critical appreciation of his work especially strong in Germany. Influential publications on Millet were published between 1884 and 1907 by important critics and art historians such as Friedrich Haack, Berthold Daun, Georg Galland, Richard Muther, and Julius Meier-Graefe, invariably characterizing him as the "forerunner of a new era."[19] In 1904, Meier-Graefe devoted an entire chapter to Millet's influence in his authoritative three-volume history of the development of modern art. He praised the artist's powerful, natural lines and simplification of form and described how this stylization—"Millet was a great synthesist"—extended into the work of Monet, Seurat, and Van Gogh.[20]

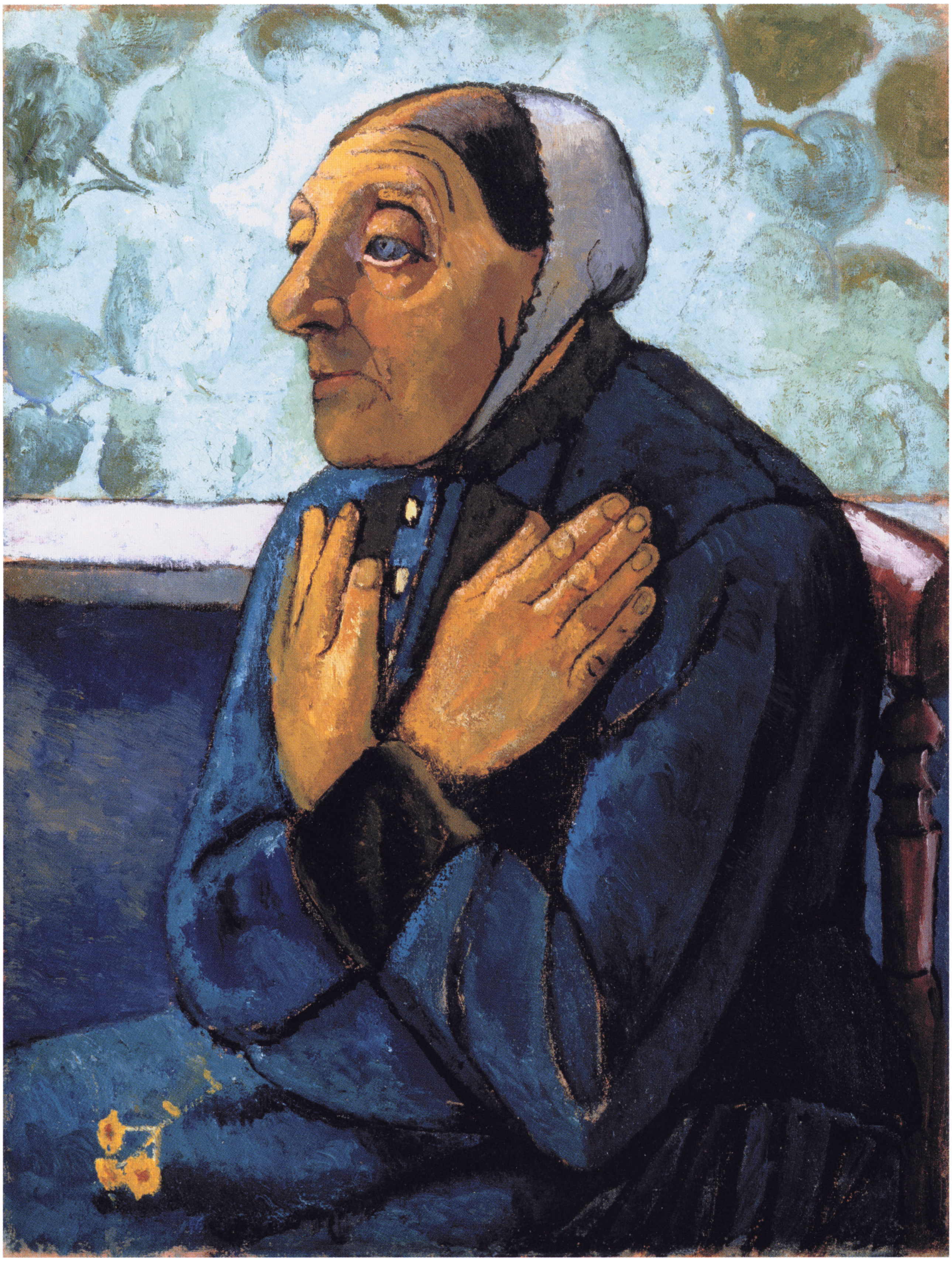
Despite his focus on the formal qualities of Millet's work, Meier-Graefe did not entirely disregard his personality, writing, "Millet was a peasant in the same complete sense."[21] In his 1907 monograph of the artist, by contrast, Richard Muther focused firmly on Millet the man: "Millet sprang from the people. He knew from personal experience the labors of the field that brown the face and callus the hands. He lived like a peasant in Barbizon, too. [...] He associated with the peasants [...] like a fellow human being."[22] To Muther, Millet's strength



175
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Landscape with Moon, c. 1900
Oil on cardboard, 42 × 55.5 cm
Paula Modersohn-Becker Stiftung, Bremen



176
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Two Girls in Front of Birch Trees, 1905
Oil on cardboard, 55.2 × 35.2 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum (bequest of
Morton D. May)



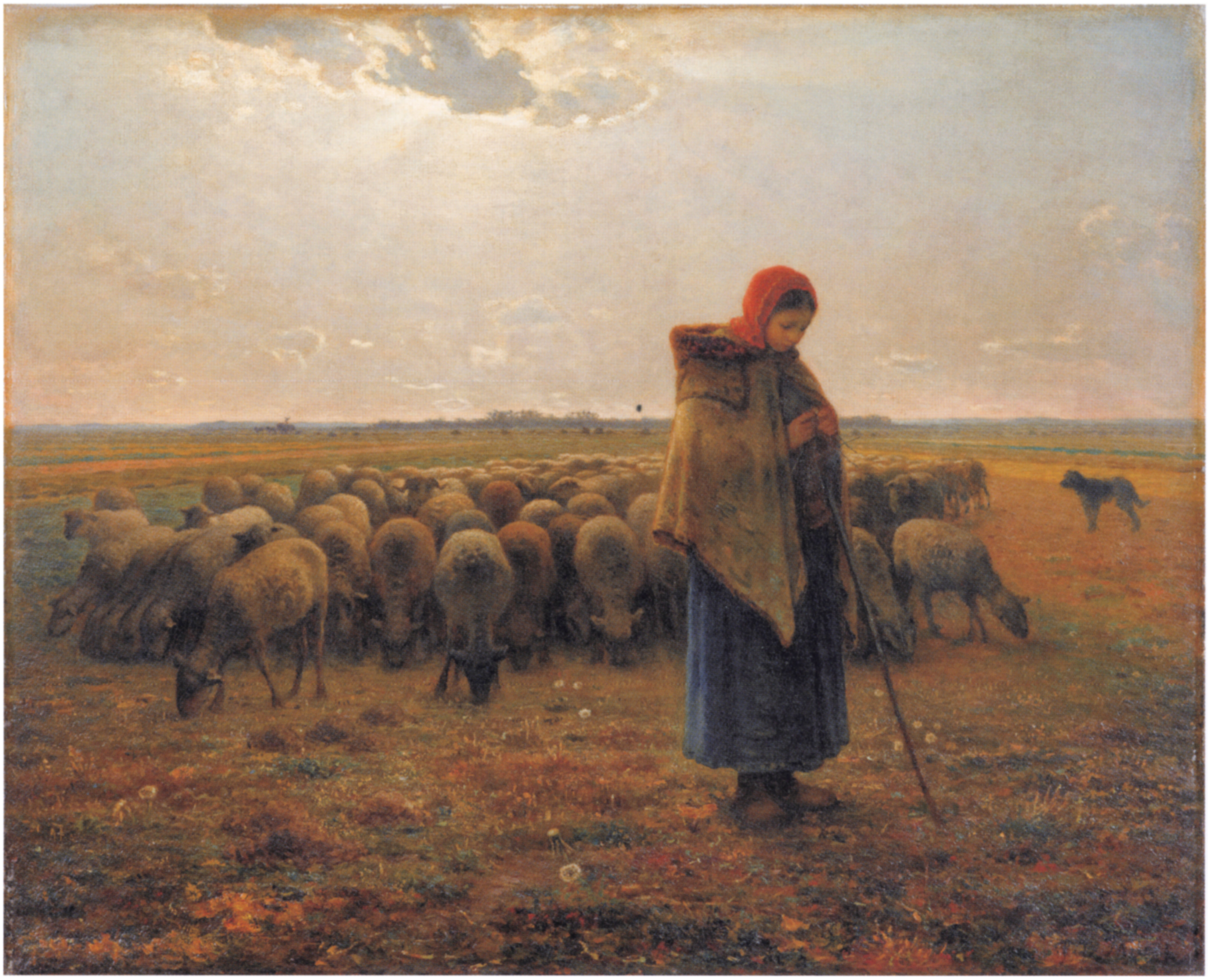
177
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Old Peasant Woman, c. 1905
Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 57.7 cm
Detroit Institute of Arts (gift of Robert H. Tannahill)

could be found in the fact that he had given ordinary people an epic, humane, and universal character and had focused on the unity between human beings and nature: "His greatness lies in the fact that he was the first to paint such people, who know neither heaven nor hell, only earth and labor. Our era no longer has any gods."[23] Muther's view was echoed in numerous other publications.[24] In Germany as in France, Millet the man had become a crucial element in the appreciation of his art. However, where the French viewed Millet as a national hero and patriotic model, the Germans managed to appropriate him as a Teutonic artist, just as they did with Van Gogh and Rembrandt.[25] His image as a peasant painter and lover of nature played a key part in this, as did his origins in Normandy (the Normans were originally Norsemen or "Northmen" from Scandinavia).[26]

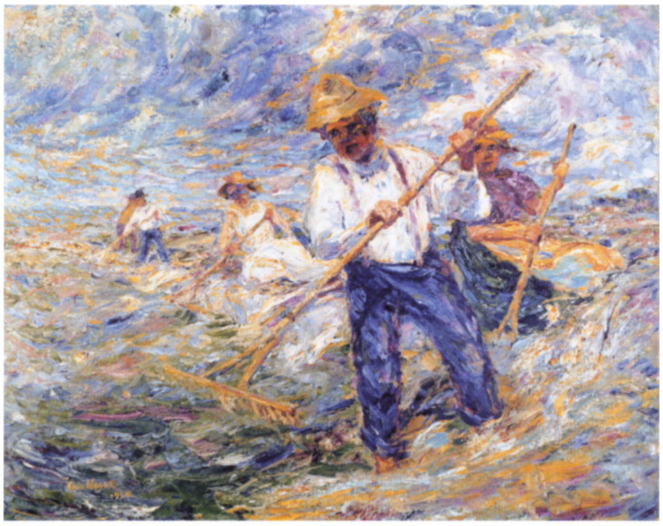
A powerful summary of the appreciation of Millet's abstracting, monumental, and religious art can be found in the diaries of the colorful diplomat Harry Graf Kessler, a great collector of French art: "Millet is actually not an artist of lines but of surfaces. That is the source of his immense tranquility, of the epic element of his pictures. That is his originality. He simplifies, because he sees only the large, rough masses, and omits everything else."[27] The religious aspect of Millet's art was also reflected in Kessler's diary: "I would number Millet and Corot and their key works among the great masters of religious art such as Van Eyck."[28]

Despite the substantial and growing esteem in which Millet's art was held in Germany, relatively few of his paintings were collected or exhibited there. *Death and the Woodcutter* (23) was shown at the important International Kunstausstellung in Munich in 1869,[29] and several works by Millet featured in three exhibitions in the same city around 1890, including the Exposition International at the Glaspalast in 1888.[30] In 1892, the Hamburg collector Alfred Lichtwark bought Millet's beautiful pastel of *Daffodils* (c. 1867, now in the Hamburg Kunsthalle), and in 1897 Hugo von Tschudi bought the painting *November* (42) for the Nationalgalerie in Berlin.[31] In his description of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, Tschudi praised Millet as "an absolute great" of French modern art.[32] All the same, further purchases of important works for German museums or collections did not materialize. Millet's oeuvre was known primarily through prints and drawings and from reproductions in art books and magazines, which might explain why German art literature paid little attention to his work as such and instead sketched a generic picture of his life and art. German artists thus seem to have related primarily to his reputation as a peasant painter, as Meier-Graefe had already noted: "There are just as many kinds of influence [...]. For them, Millet is the peasant painter."[33]

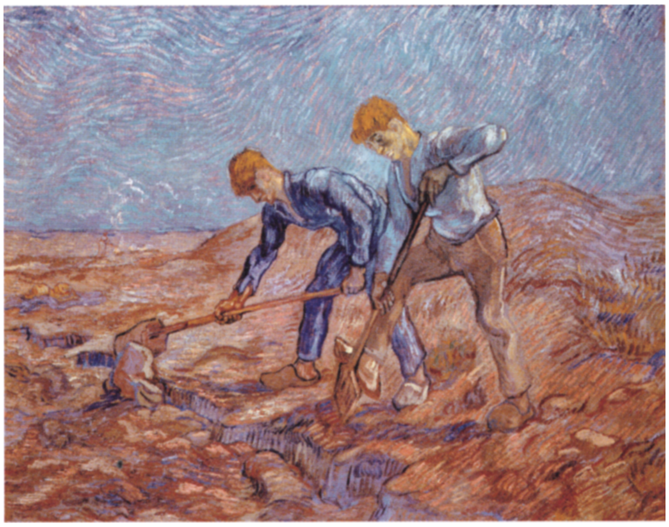
Paula Modersohn-Becker was one of those artists. She lived and worked in Worpswede, an artists' colony near Bremen, with her husband the landscape painter Otto Modersohn. Similar colonies sprang up all over Europe in the nineteenth century, located in the countryside far away from bourgeois urban life. The distance from the city was not merely geographical, but utopian too: an idealized image of rural life held sway in these artists' colonies. Peasants were supposedly closer to nature and hence also to humanity's original condition.[34] Rural populations offered a rich source of inspiration for primitivist ideals, part of a nostalgic yearning that flourished in reaction to Europe's ongoing industrialization and urbanization. Barbizon—"one of the most famous villages in the world" at the time—had developed into a social and artistic model that was widely emulated.[35] It was frequently mentioned in the same breath as Millet, who had lived and worked permanently in the village from 1849. The artist Fritz Mackensen, for instance, described the area around Worpswede to Otto Modersohn as "pictures, as original as only those painted by Millet."[36] Modersohn, in turn, declared that he had seen a peasant girl who was "a real Millet."[37] Paula Modersohn-Becker painted the rural population in and around Worpswede with Millet in mind. Given all the books and reviews on the subject of Millet that were published in Germany, she is sure to have been well acquainted with his life and work. Like him, she set out to immortalize the peasants in her area, especially the women and their children, in a universal, human, and timeless way (176, 177). She simplified forms and lines and imbued her



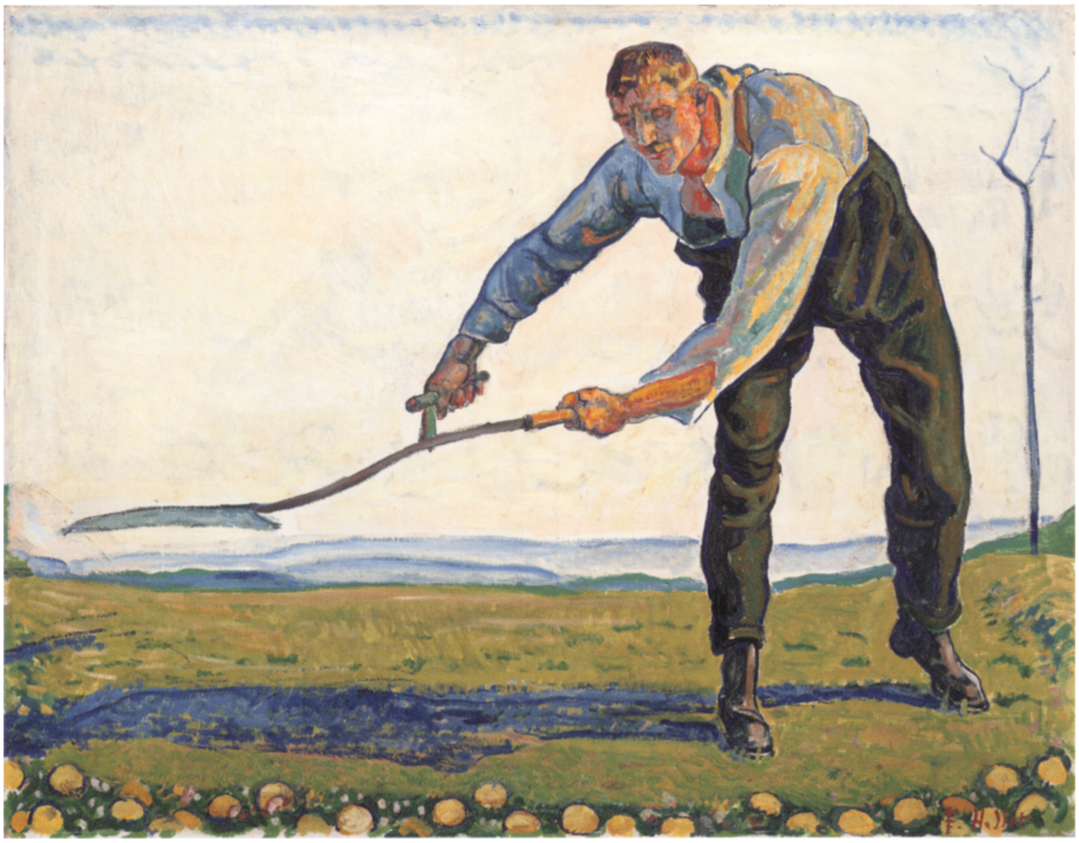
178
Jean-François Millet
Shepherdess with her Flock, c. 1863
Oil on canvas, 81 × 101 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



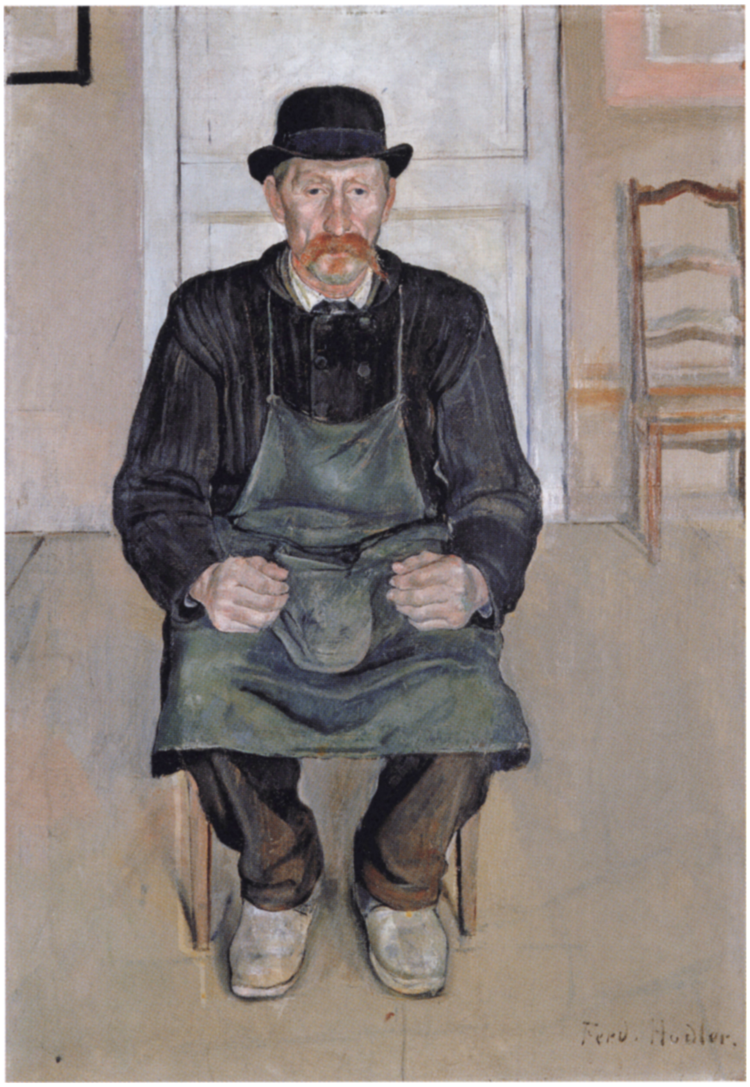
179
Emil Nolde
Harvest Day, 1905
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 cm
Private collection



180
Vincent van Gogh
Two Peasants Digging, 1889
Oil on canvas, 72 × 92 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



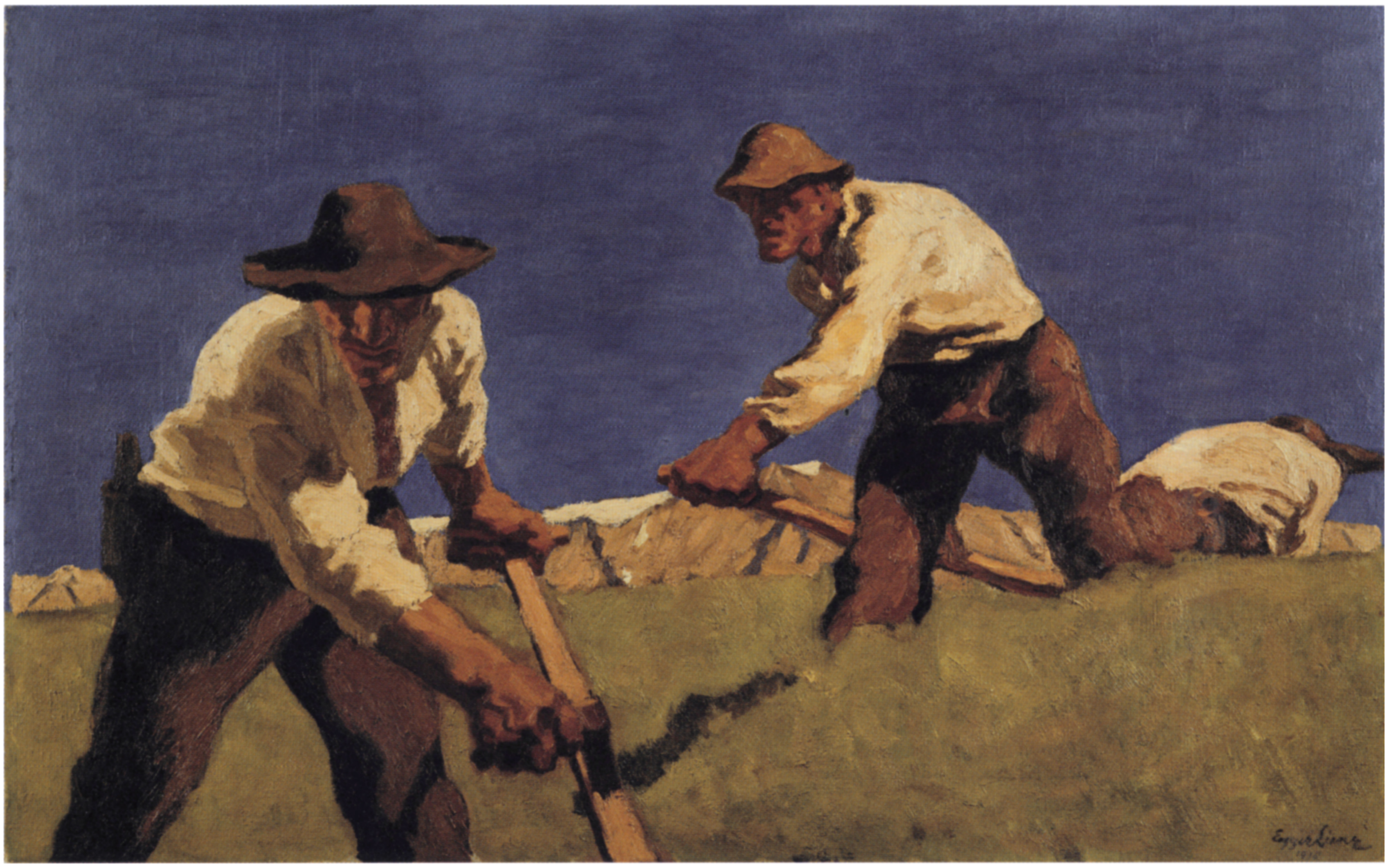
181
Ferdinand Hodler
The Reaper, 1909
Oil on canvas, 82 × 105,5 cm
Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte,
Winterthur



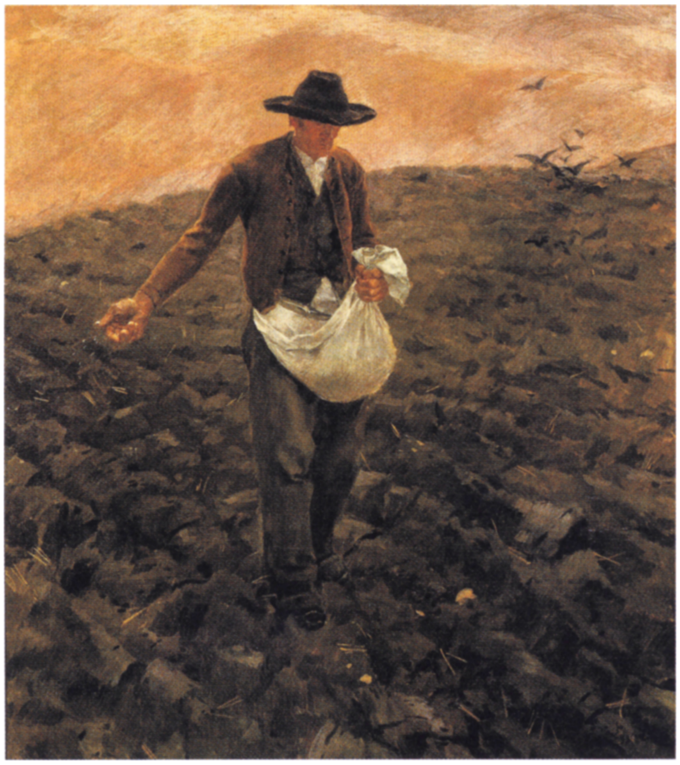
182
Ferdinand Hodler
Portrait of an Unknown Man (Sitting Winegrower), c. 1887
Oil on canvas, 55 × 38 cm
Kunsthaus Zürich, 1912

figures with an expressive and primitive force. Her first visit to Paris in 1900 gave her the opportunity to see the French master's work in person. Following a visit to the *Centennale*, the retrospective exhibition of French art at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, she wrote: "A man in the field putting his jacket on against a bright evening sky pleased me the most," referring to Millet's *The End of the Workday* (78).[38]

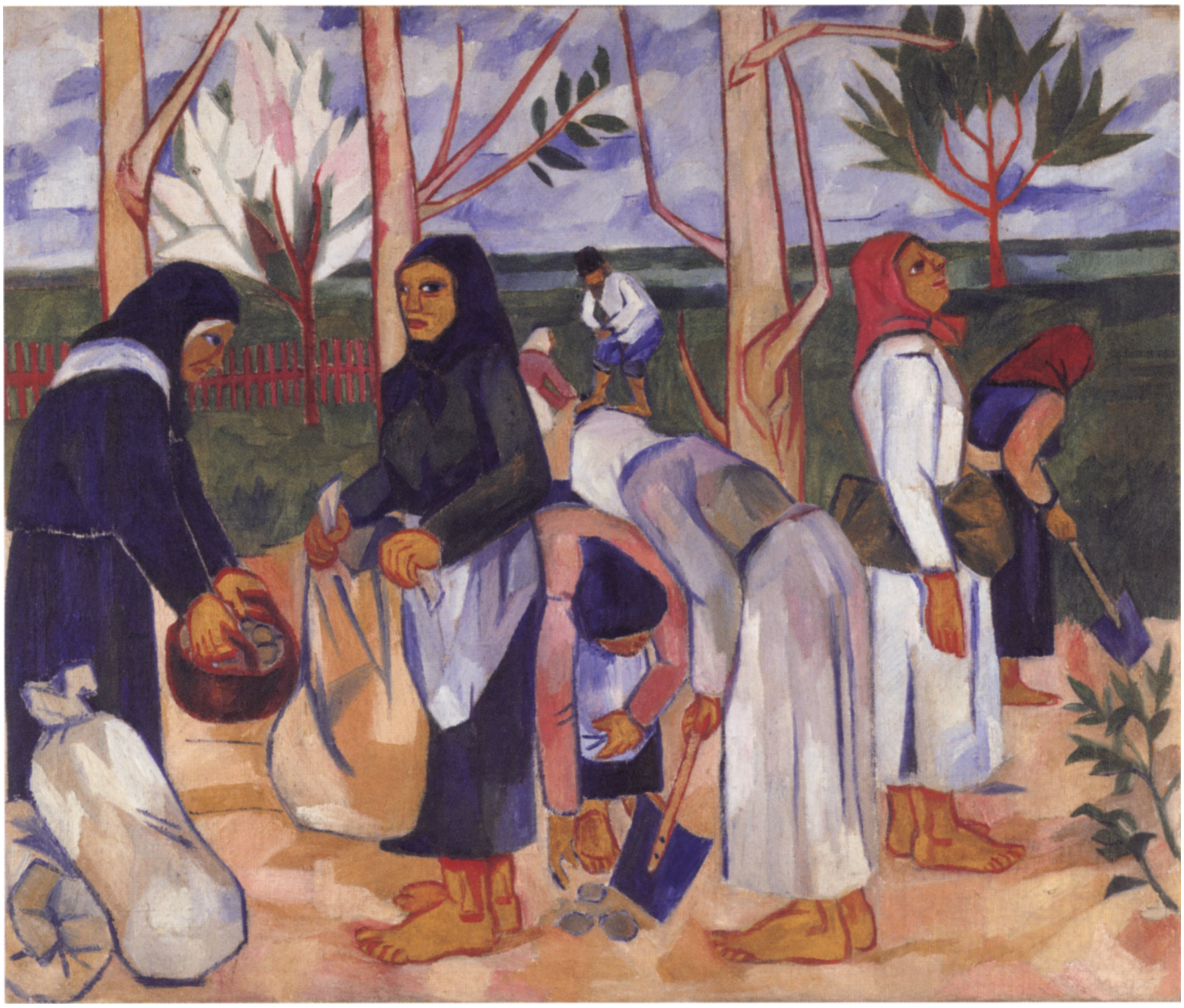
Emil Nolde was another German artist impressed by Millet's work. Although he felt that "Millet's technical (pictorial) skills are not very great," as he wrote to his friend Hans Fehr in 1899, "he possesses the third and second characteristics [i.e. imagination and poetic power] to a very high degree."[39] His drawing after Millet's *Shepherdess*, like his other copies after earlier masters, was therefore an exploration of composition, the arrangement of light and dark, movement, and the grouping of mass, in order "to achieve clarity. But also to learn lots of things, so that I should be able to avoid them in my own art."[40] Nolde drew on Millet's peasant themes several times, including in *Harvest Day* (179). It is immediately obvious, however, that he was looking not only at Millet, but also at the expressive and colorful work of Van Gogh (his *Two Peasants Digging* of 1899, for example (180)), and through Van Gogh back once again to Millet. This line of influence had already been predicted in 1899 by Meier-Graefe in his article "Contribution to a New Aesthetics": "Van Gogh acknowledged Millet […] Van Gogh gained from him what will also be valuable for a future that might risk underestimating Millet."[41] Meier-Graefe's words proved prophetic, as Millet's work would indeed be undervalued in the twentieth century. Thanks to Van Gogh, however,



183
Albin Egger-Lienz
Three Reapers (version 1), 1918
Oil on canvas, 83.5 × 131.3 cm
Leopold Museum, Vienna



184
Albin Egger-Lienz
The Sower, 1918
Oil on canvas, 177 × 156 cm
Museum Schloss Bruck, Lienz



185
Natalia Gontcharova
Planting Potatoes, 1908–9
Oil on canvas, 111 × 133 cm
Musee d'Art Moderne et Contemporain,
Strasbourg

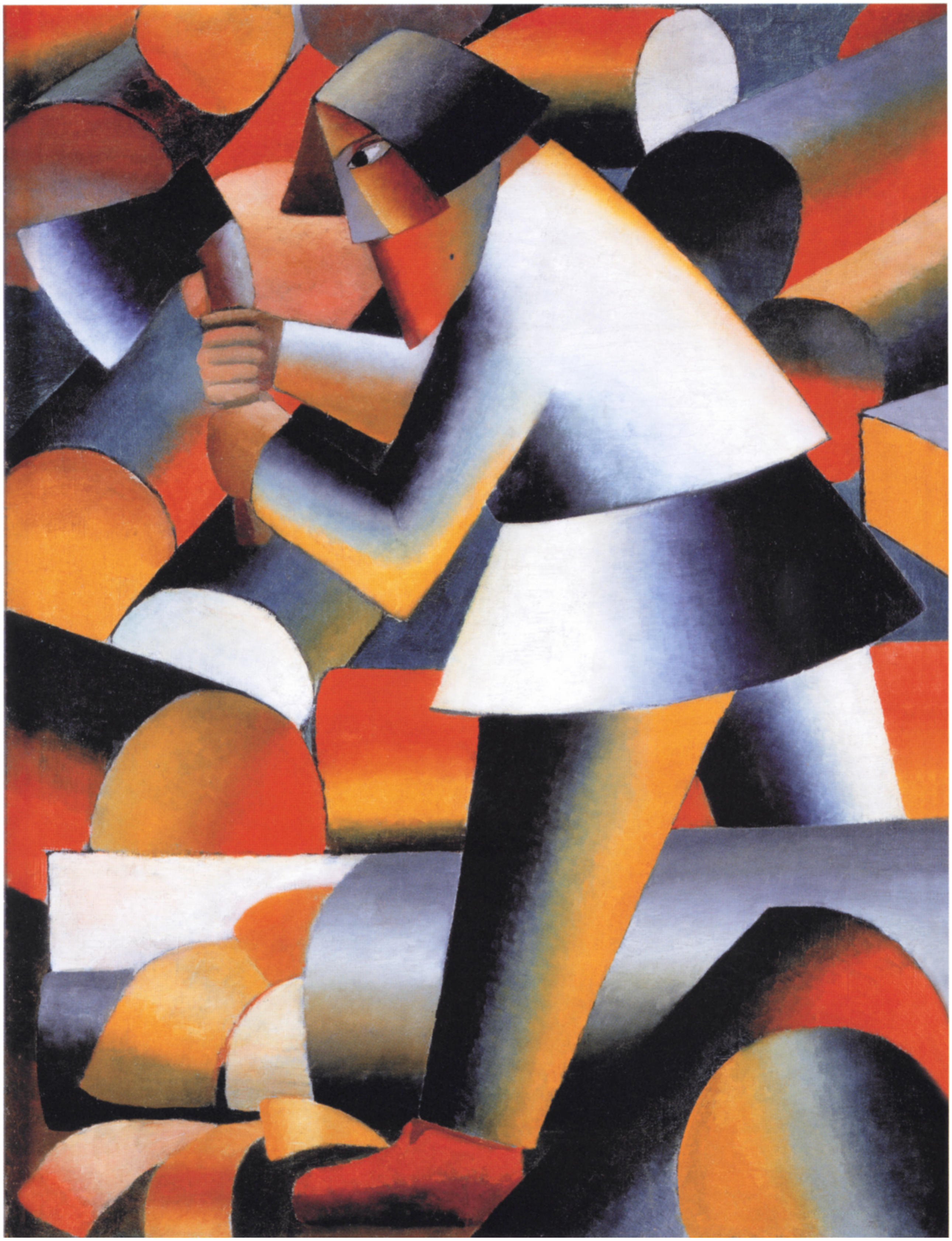
artists, critics, and the public have been reminded of its importance.

There was a great deal of attention to and admiration for Millet's life and work in Switzerland and Austria too. Once again, the emphasis was on his reputation as a peasant painter and on his formal qualities—his lines and his simplification of form and mass, through which he lent his figures a stately and exalted quality. The unity of human beings and nature, in which the peasant, grandiose and frontal, dominates the landscape, resonates in the work of Ferdinand Hodler. His reapers, like Millet's, are heroic workers anchored monumentally in the landscape (181). Hodler depicted his peasants not only as powerful figures but also, in other works, as exhausted and resting after their work was done. In the same way as Millet, he immortalized the men, dirty and tired perhaps, but not without a certain heroism thanks to their frame-filling monumentality (182, 106).[42]

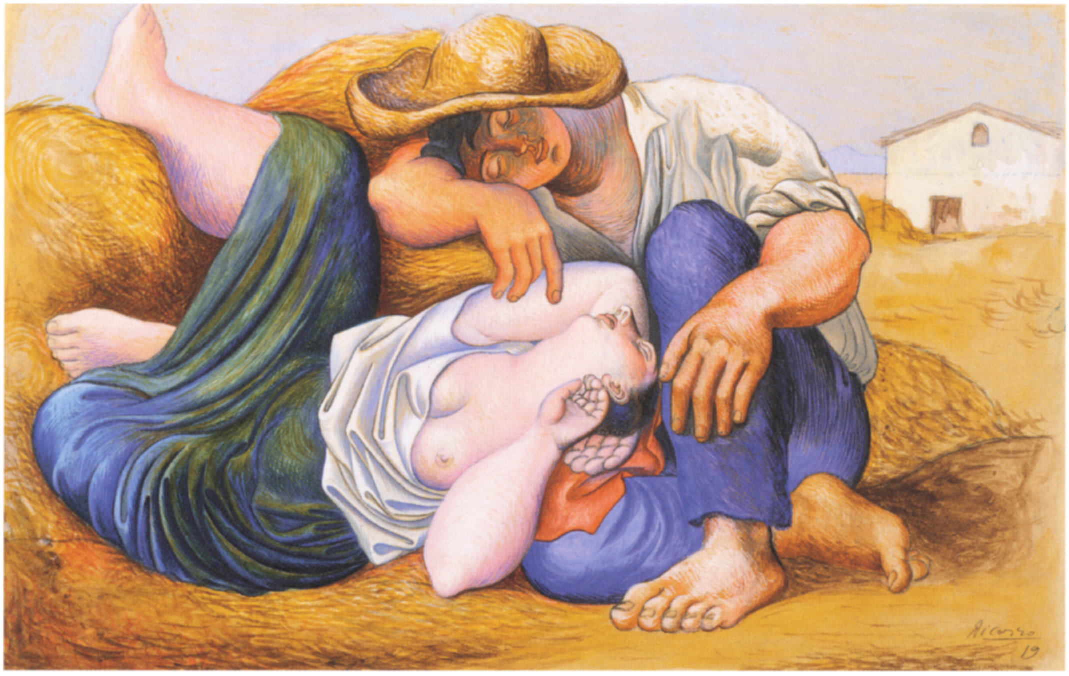
Millet's images of rural life also inspired the Austrian artist Albin Egger-Lienz in his quest for a new "monumental and decorative" painting.[43] Egger-Lienz moved to Munich in 1884, where he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and where he might also have seen the abovementioned three exhibitions of 1888, 1891, and 1893, which also featured work by Millet. Like so many other artists, Egger-Lienz found a formal and ideal unity in Millet between humanity and nature, which he also strove to achieve.[44] In 1903, Egger-Lienz painted his first *Sower* (184), explicitly inspired by Millet's large, austere figure from 1850: "I have found a splendid model and the work is already in motion. A peasant sowing a plowed field."[45] Millet's images of sowers and reapers remained an important source of inspiration for him, and he continued to produce variations on the theme throughout his life. In a 1918 painting (183), Egger-Lienz incorporated three reapers in a dynamic and original composition. The figures harvesting the land are monumental and powerful, their expressions intense with the demands of their labor, as is often the case in Millet too. The men's white shirts and large hands stand out against a clear blue sky with the peaks of a mountain range visible at the horizon.

Russian Peasants

Millet's work and reputation spread to other parts of the world as well. French art and culture were heavily promoted abroad by the country's government, with exhibitions of modern French art held all over the world, including St. Petersburg in 1896 and Moscow in 1897. The Bernheim-Jeune gallery in Paris was the main lender in those cases, supplying paintings from the Barbizon School and the Impressionists, as well as works by Millet. The exhibitions were a great success and were widely reported and reviewed. The sculptor Mark Antokolsky wrote in 1897 in *Vestnik Evropy* (Messenger of Europe): "Delacroix and Millet are universal idols; they have eclipsed everyone [...]. They are without a doubt very important artists; Millet's works, for example, are unusually plastic."[46] Kazimir Malevich and Natalia Goncharova (185), both of whom made the peasant figure a central theme of their work, might have seen the French master's work for the first time at the abovementioned shows. Nineteenth-century and contemporary French art, including works by Delacroix, Millet, and Corot, could also be found increasingly in the many museums and private collections in St. Petersburg and Moscow.[47] Another major Russian exhibition of French art, *The Centennial of French Painting, 1812–1912*, was held at the Institut Français in St. Petersburg in 1912, and it is known that Malevich saw Millet's imposing peasant paintings there.[48] In his diaries and notebooks in the years that followed, he mentioned Millet's name as part of a series of artists who were important to him.[49] He also wrote in his 1927 Suprematist manifesto *The Non-Objective World*: "Giotto, Rubens, Rembrandt, Millet, Cézanne, Braque, Picasso, on the other hand, grasped the essence of things and created enduring, absolute values."[50] He went on: "The development of Millet's painting, the pictorial culture of which still resided, so to speak, in the center of the village (it was, that is, a rural, purely pictorial culture), can be followed, via Cézanne, down to the present day."[51] Malevich situated himself in this rural pictorial tradition and repeatedly painted and drew themes such as harvests, reapers, and woodcutters.[52] Though he followed Cézanne's analytical method in his



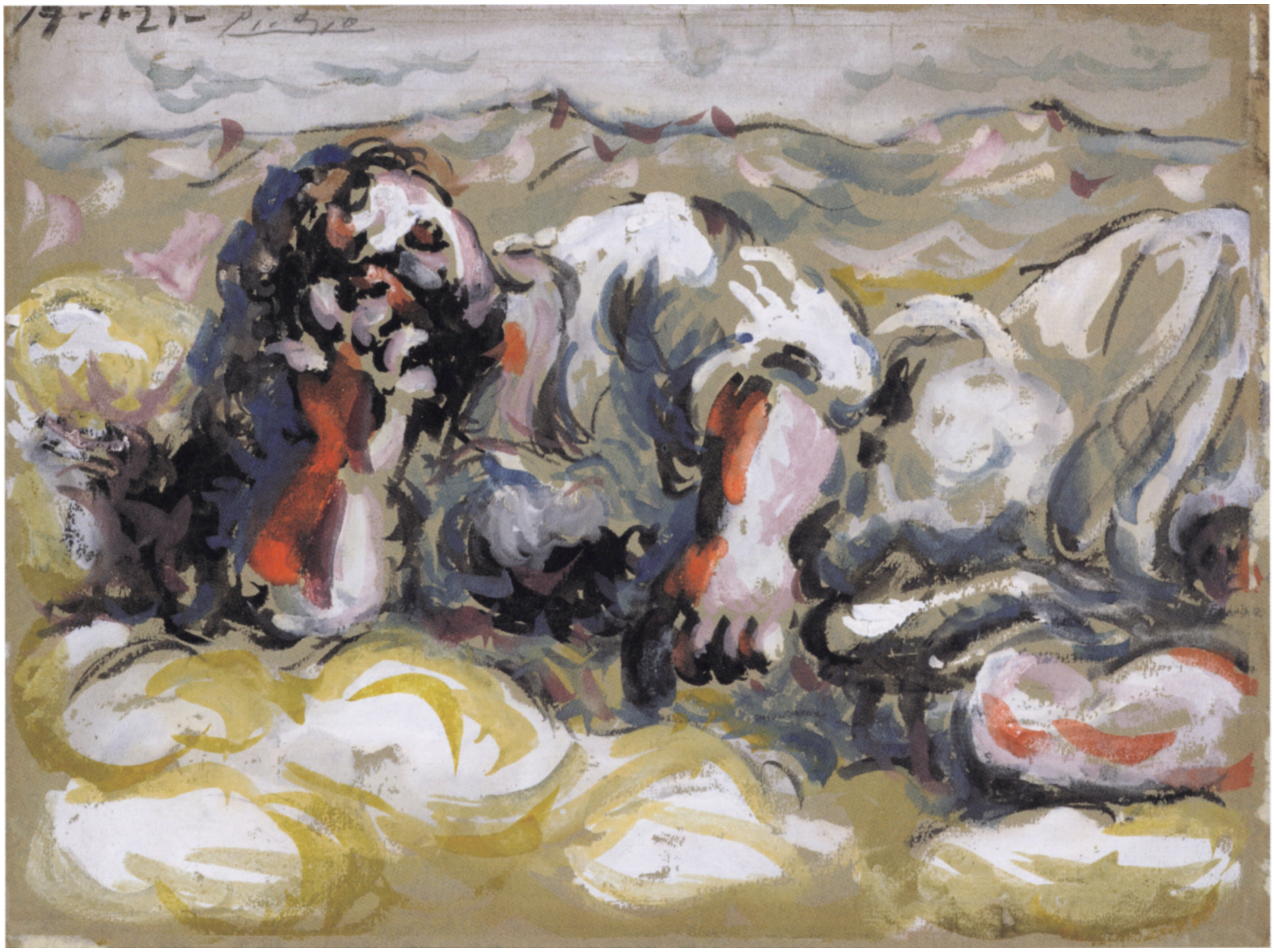
186
Kazimir Malevich
The Woodcutter, 1912
Oil on canvas, 94 × 71.5 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (ownership
recognized by agreement with the estate
of Kazimir Malevich in 2008)



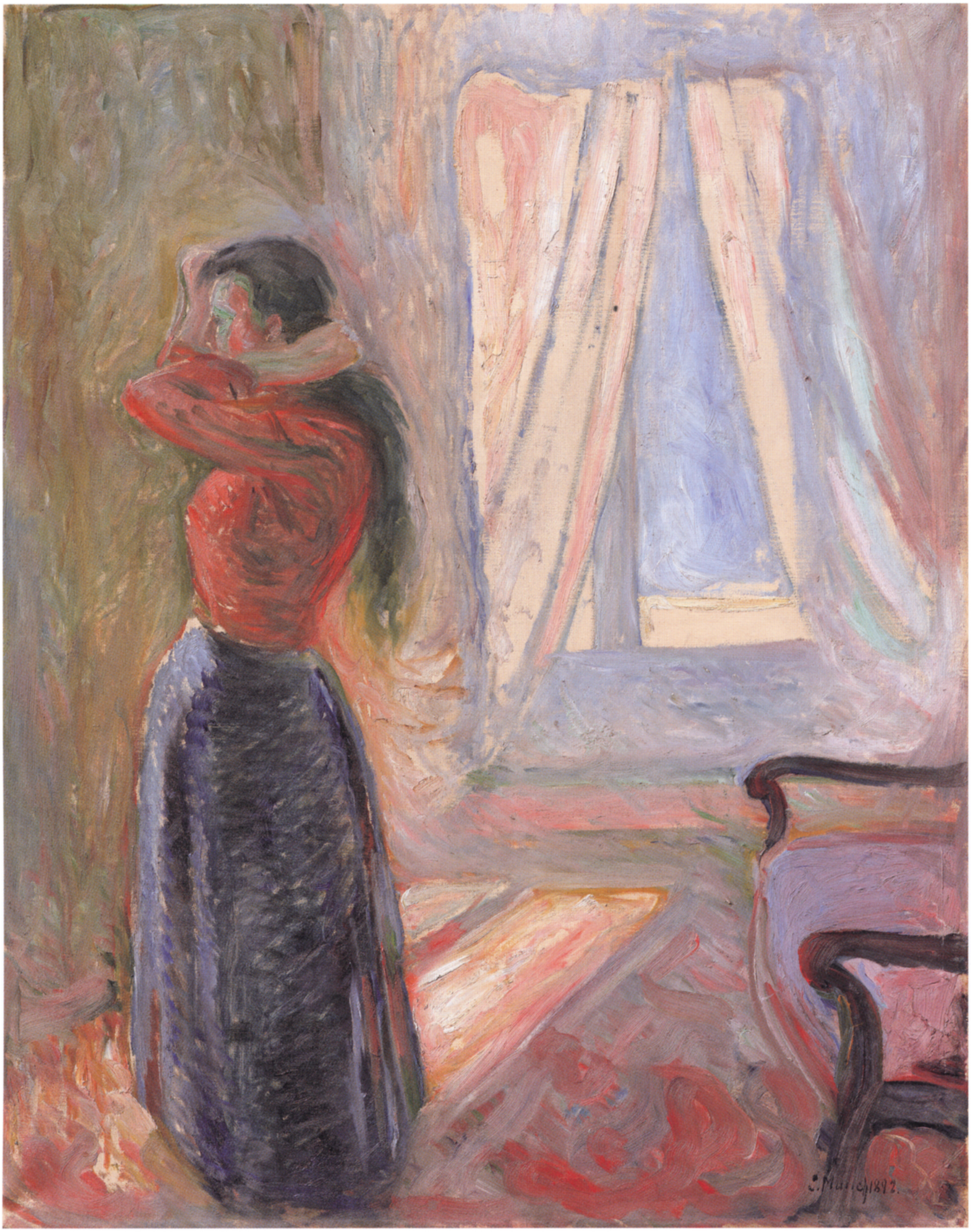
187
Pablo Picasso
Sleeping Peasants, 1919
Gouache, watercolor, and pencil on paper,
31.1 × 48.9 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
(Abby Aldrich Rockefuller Fund)

representations of peasants and workers, which he structured using cylinders and cones (186), the monumentality and dignity of his figures, executed grandly and full-frame, immediately remind us however of Millet's oeuvre. Malevich also harked back to the mid-nineteenth-century interpretation of Millet's poor, honest peasants as revolutionary and socially critical representations.

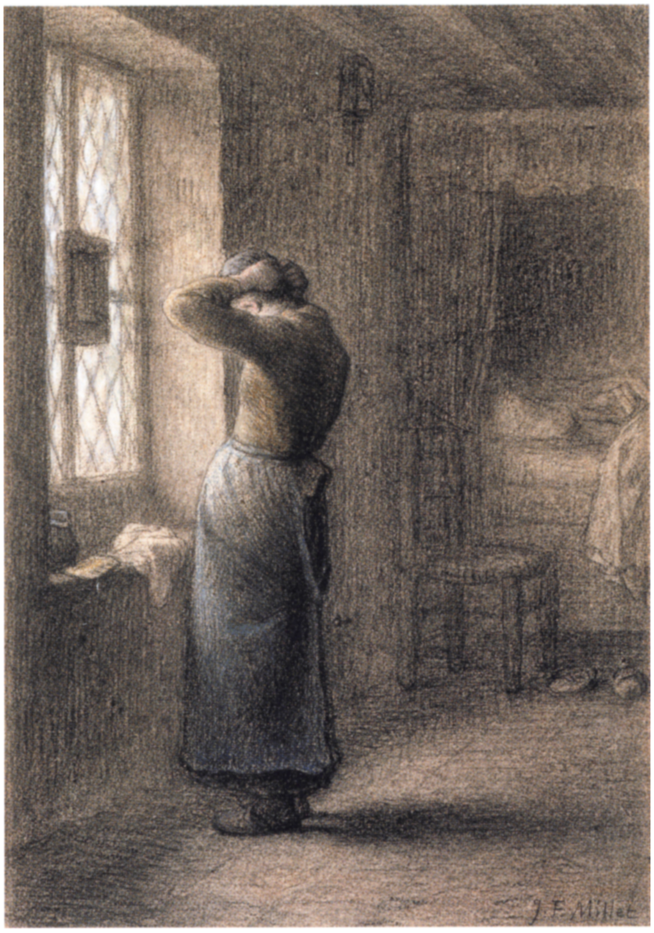
The works of all these artists, varied as they are across nationality, style, themes, and artistic ambitions, illustrate how widespread and long-lasting Millet's influence was. However, artists in France itself appear to have been less concerned with Millet's artistic legacy. The one who perhaps dealt with this question most closely was Picasso, in a series of gouaches and watercolors he made between 1919 and 1921 of resting peasants that take Millet's pastel *Noonday Rest* of 1866 (128) as their model.[53] Picasso's gouache *Sleeping Peasants* (187) adheres quite closely to the original composition, in which the figures rest against a stack of hay. The arrangement is reversed, however, suggesting that he might have based it on a print after Millet's work, just as Van Gogh had done with his painted "copy" in 1889 (180). Picasso placed the figures at the center of his work and largely omitted the suggestion of landscape found in Millet and Van Gogh.



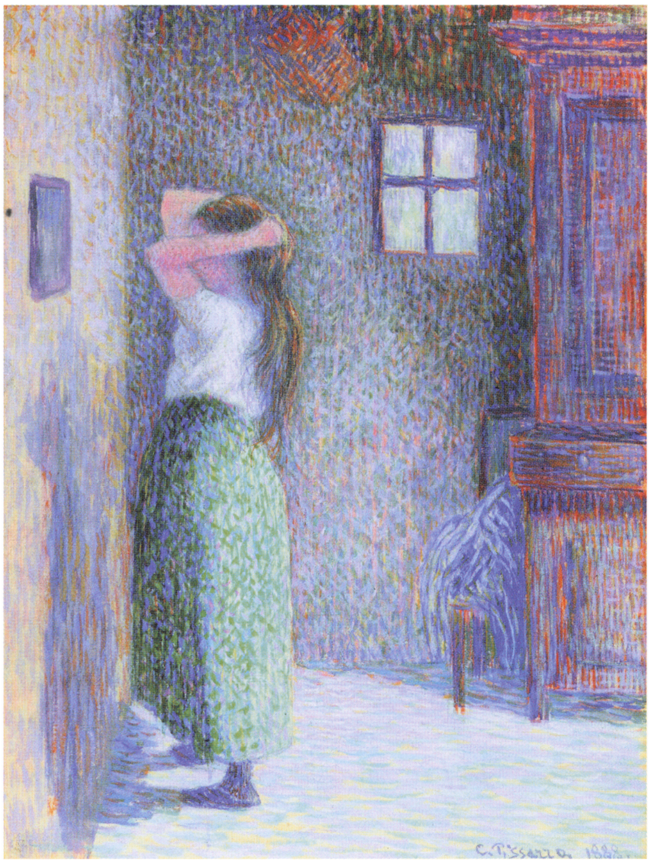
188
Pablo Picasso
The Siesta, 1921
Watercolor on paper, 23.5 × 31.5 cm
Private collection


E. Munch 1892.

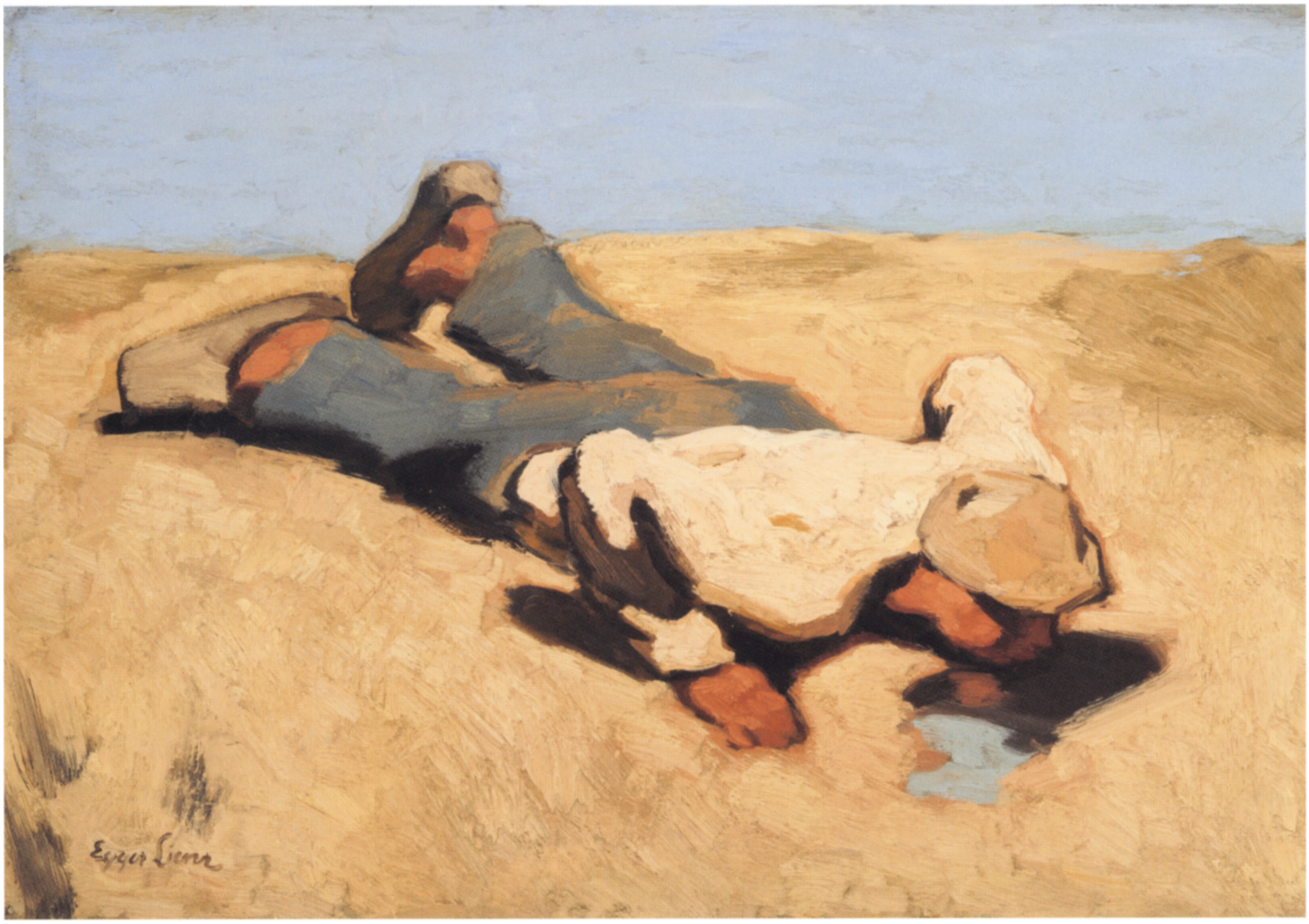
189
Edvard Munch
Woman Looking in the Mirror, 1892
Oil on canvas, 92 × 72.5 cm
Private collection



190
Jean-François Millet
Morning Toilette, 1860–62
Black Conté crayon and pastel on paper,
37.1 × 25.7 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
(gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through
Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian
Shaw Haughton)



191
Camille Pissarro
Young Peasant at Her Toilette, 1888
Gouache on linen, 32 × 24 cm
Private collection


Egger Lienz

192
Albin Egger-Lienz
The Spring, 1924
Oil on wood, 55 × 78 cm
Hainz Collection, Vienna

Notes

Introduction

1 Letter 428, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 3 February 1884.

2 Greenberg showed virtually no interest in Millet, only mentioning his work once in passing in a review of 23 November 1947. Greenberg 1986, vol. 2, p. 182.

3 For previous discussions of Millet's legacy, see Herbert 2002, pp. 40–48, and Salé 1998, pp. 16–29.

4 For exhibitions focusing on Millet's impact on Van Gogh, see Van Tilborgh et al. 1988 and Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998.

5 Herbert 2002a, p. 40.

6 Letter 515, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Tuesday, 14 July 1885.

7 A relief bronze of Millet and Theodore Rousseau, by Henri Chapu, was installed at Barbizon in 1884. A statue by the same sculptor was erected at Cherbourg in 1892, and a full-length statue by Marcel Jacques at the artist's birthplace of Gréville in 1898.

8 Among these biographies were Sensier 1881; Yriarte 1885; Cartwright 1896; and Rolland 1902.

9 For comparable exhibitions, see Noon and Riopelle 2015; and Pomarède 2009.

10 For exhibitions of Millet's work, see the still seminal Herbert 1975–76; Murphy et al. 1999; and Georgel and Scottez-De Wambrechies 2017.

11 "l'oeuvre picturale la plus troublante, la plus énigmatique, la plus dense, la plus riche en pensées inconscientes qui ait jamais été." Dalí 1963, p. 17, English trans. in Dalí 1986, p. 3.

1 "This Artistic Fauve": Millet as Modern Artist

Epigraph: "C'est un peu troubler les heureux dans leur repos." Jean-François Millet to Alfred Sensier, August 1863, in Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 138.

1 *The Angelus* was bought at the sale of the collection of the industrialist Eugène Secrétan by Antonin Proust, the Minister of Fine Arts, but the French state failed to provide the money for the picture and it was instead acquired by the underbidder, the American Art Association. See Pludermacher 2017, p. 40.

2 Mantz 1887. Millet's exhibition was part of an official effort in the 1880s to assimilate dead "radical" artists into the liberal, republican French state. This was also evident in Courbet's 1882 retrospective and that of Manet in 1884. See Nochlin 1994, pp. 109–21.

3 For this narrative see McWilliam 1999, and Fratello 2003, pp. 685–701.

4 Sensier 1881. This biography appeared first in translation in the American magazine *Scribner's* in 1880 before being published in abridged and translated book form in Kay 1881.

5 See Parsons and McWilliam 1983. For another biography see Yriarte 1885.

6 For the correspondence see Lepoittevin 2005. This is a valuable compilation of the artist's letters and those of his correspondents. Unfortunately, it was privately published and is not widely available. For earlier writing on Millet, see Herbert 1962 and 1975–76; Moreau-Nélaton 1921; Pollock 1977; Coughlin 2001; Murphy 1984 and 2002; Georgel 2014.

7 Raffey 1875, p. 1; Chesneau 1875, pp. 428–41.

8 "Il nous semble que Millet a apporté dans l'école un élément nouveau, une manière qui, en abrégeant la forme, la généralise et l'agrandit." Mantz 1875, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 221.

9 Burty's obituary was written in 1875 but only published two years later in his compilation of essays *Maîtres et petits maîtres*.

10 Burty 1861.

11 "Son œuvre, d'esprit tout moderne, eût trouvé son développement normal et eût rayonné chaudement dans la société républicaine dont nous foulons le seuil." Burty 1877, p. 279.

12 "force." Ibid., p. 290.

13 Bürger 1974, English trans. in Bürger 1984.

14 See Eisenman 2011, pp. 206–24.

15 Rodrigues 1825. Olinde Rodrigues was a Saint-Simonian, an adherent of the utopian socialist ideas of Count Henri de Saint-Simon.

16 "ces médecins [de Danube] qui arrivent avec des recettes solides et une santé imperturbable" (these [Danube] doctors who come with solid recipes and imperturbable health). Thoré 1870, vol. 1, p. 93.

17 Millet often sent drawings of *sabots* to friends as a calling card, for example to the writer Alexandre Piedagnel in 1864. For Sensier, the *sabots* "were [Millet's] coat of arms, as it were." Kay 1881, p. 127.

18 "Vous ressemblez à un chef de paysans qu'on va fusiller." Sensier 1881, p. 219, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 146.

19 "Ce petit portrait est, pour moi, toute la vie de Millet." Sensier 1881, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 146.

20 "More than once, [Millet] spoke to me of the utter want of appreciation of the charms of nature shown by the peasant population of Barbizon, of their often discontented and repining spirit, their low aims, their sordid views, their petty jealousies." Wheelwright 1876, p. 275.

21 Georgel 2017, p. 21.

22 "un bon laboureur." Burty 1877, p. 281.

23 See for example Millet 1894; Petitjean 1898.

24 Herbert 2007, p. 541.

25 Burty 1877, p. 282.

26 Herbert 1976, p. 45.

27 Millet's first wife, Pauline-Virginie Ono, died in 1844. The widowed artist lived in Paris from 1845 with his partner Catherine Lemaire without his family's knowledge. He had four children out of wedlock with Catherine before being married to her in a civil ceremony in 1853, just after the death of his mother.

28 The presence of a bow supports this identification. The painting was, however, reproduced in print form with the title *Le Sommeil de Venus* (The Sleep of Venus) in Durand-Ruel's 1873 catalogue (no. 97). This original title further suggests the erotic connotations of the work.

29 The picture was never delivered and remained in Millet's studio until his death, with much of the surface having been painted over. Laughton 1979a.

30 Boime 1971, pp. 78–80.

31 "comme un diable pour la République." Millet's mother to Jean-François Millet, 28 June 1848, in Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 1, p. 74.

32 Pollock 1977, p. 56, argues there is a "sublimated eroticism" at times in his images of peasant life, as in the suggestive shape of the woman's dress in *Woman Baking Bread* (1854, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo).

33 Sensier 1881, p. 112.

34 "Mais enfin, les premiers [i.e. peasant subjects] vont mieux à mon tempérament; car je vous avouerai, au risque de passer pour encore plus socialiste, que c'est le côté humain, franchement humain, qui me touche le plus en art." Millet to Sensier, 1 February 1851, in Sensier 1881, p. 130.

35 Clapham 1966, p. 159.

36 Clark 1973, p. 80.

37 Bonnemère 1856, pp. 350–80.

38 Bonnemère estimated that the male worker earned 375 francs a year, working for a period of 260 days (fifty of which were during the period of the harvest). Ibid., p. 378.

39 Among these crops were wheat, barley, rye, oats, and potatoes, as well as small areas of fallow pasture, hay fields, and vineyards. Farmers raised cows, sheep, chickens, and pigs, and there were kitchen gardens behind the houses. Thomas 2000, p. 151.

40 The 1851 census listed a population in Barbizon of sixteen growers, thirty-four male and ten female day workers (*manoeuvriers* and *manoeuvrières*) who worked as hired hands, six seamstresses, five quarrymen, five forest guards, four woodcutters, three bakers, one herdsman, two shepherds, two weavers, and one road worker. See Fanica 1995, p. 195, and Thomas 2000, p. 250, n. 11. Fanica estimates an overall population of three hundred at mid-century while Thomas suggests two hundred.

41 Sensier 1881. Millet produced a number of early self-portraits (4).

42 Millet as recorded in Sensier 1881, p. 53, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 50. On a visit to the Louvre Millet was particularly impressed by a pietà drawing (possibly *Etude pour une Pietà*, inv. 716, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, although this was not acquired by the Louvre until 1850) of "a man in a swoon" ("homme évanoui"). He believed that the Florentine artist succeeded "in personifying the good and bad of humanity" ("de

personnifier le bien et le mal de l'humanité"). He went on: "It was Michelangelo—that says it all. I had already seen mediocre engravings from him in Cherbourg; here I first touched the heart and understood the speech of he who has so haunted me all my life" ("C'était Michel-Ange. C'est tout dit. J'en avais vu déjà des gravures médiocres à Cherbourg; mais je touchais le Coeur et j'entendais la parole de celui qui me hanta si fortement toute ma vie").

43 "Le geste a une énergie toute michel-angelesque, et le ton une puissance étrange [...]. C'est le *Démos* moderne." Sabatier-Ungher 1851, pp. 39–40. On 4 February 1851, Millet thanked Sensier for a batch of press reviews, which included that of Sabatier-Ungher (Département des Arts Graphiques, Musée du Louvre, Paris, A1717; hereafter DAG, Louvre).

44 This was reduced to a limited franchise in May 1850.

45 "this figure [...] seems to be painted with the very earth that he is sowing" ("cette figure [...] semble peint avec la terre qu'il ensemence"), Gautier 1851, n.p. Millet noted of Gautier's review, "The comment on my impasto is very perceptive also." ("La remarque sur mes empâtements est très juste aussi.") Millet to Sensier, 24 March 1851 (DAG, Louvre, A1718).

46 Millet as recorded by Sensier. "Poussin [...] est le prophète, le sage et le philosophe, sans cesser d'être le metteur en scène le plus éloquent." Sensier 1881, p. 56, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 51.

47 "Barye trouve que votre exposition est la plus forte du Salon." Louis Campredon to Jean-François Millet, 4 July 1853 (DAG, Louvre, A2403).

48 Gautier 1853.

49 Count Emilien de Nieuwerkerke, the key figure in making decisions about state patronage, dismissed the work of the Barbizon painters as "the painting of democrats, of men who don't change their underwear." Mainardi 1987, p. 184. An exception was *Peasant Woman Tending a Cow* (24) commissioned by the state in 1852.

50 See Vardi 1993, p. 1429.

51 Bonnemère 1856, pp. 378–79.

52 "Derrière ces trois glaneuses se silhouettent, dans l'horizon plombé, les piques des émeutes populaires et les échafauds de 93." Rousseau 1857.

53 "Cette toile qui rappelle d'effroyables misères [...] une de ces pages de la nature vraies et grandes, comme en trouvaient Homère et Virgile." Castagnary contrasted Millet's work with Courbet's images of peasant life, like the rag-wearing *Stonebreakers* which more overtly emphasized peasant hardship. Castagnary 1892, p. 24.

54 The twentieth-century French economic historian Louis Chevalier described woodcutters as the "proletariat of the woods." Cited in Clark 1973, p. 79.

55 "Le bûcheron de Millet [...] est non pas le paysan de 1660, mais le prolétaire de 1859." Dumas 1859, p. 118.

56 "Ses paysans sont des pédants qui ont d'eux-mêmes une trop haute opinion. [...] Dans leur monotone laideur, tous ces petits parias ont une prétention philosophique, mélancolique et raphaélesque." Baudelaire 1859, in Baudelaire 1975–76, vol. 2, p. 661.

57 Merson 1861, quoted in Kelly 2009, p. 299.

58 Waller 2008, pp. 196–200.

59 Petitjean 1898, pp. 129–34.

60 Herbert 2002a, p. 40.

61 Millet owned five paintings that he believed to be by Bruegel. These appeared as *The Gardeners*, *The Skaters*, *A Kermess*, *Works of Mercy* and *Village Festival* in the 1894 sale held by his widow. They have not been identified and, despite Millet's belief in their authenticity, were undoubtedly examples of the many painted copies made by the studio of Pieter Brueghel the Younger after compositions by his father.

62 Kelly 2009, p. 304.

63 Ibid., p. 303.

64 Ibid., p. 305.

65 The Barbizon artist Georges Gassies noted the barren land skirting the forest, suggesting that the forest may be behind the viewer here. See Gassies 1907, p. 108; Laughton 1979b, p. 659.

66 Millet to Sensier, 1 February 1851. "Dans les endroits labourés, quoique parfois dans certains pays peu labourables, vous voyez des figures bêchant, piochant; vous en voyez une, de temps en temps, se redressant les reins, comme on dit, et s'essuyant le front avec les revers de la main. *Tu mangeras ton pain à la sueur de ton front*. Est-ce là ce travail gai, folâtre, auquel certaines gens voudraient nous faire croire? C'est cependant là que se trouve pour moi la vraie humanité, la grande poésie." Sensier 1881, p. 130, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 93.

67 Millet to Sensier, 11 January 1862. "*L'Homme à la houe* me fera houspiller de bien des gens qui n'aiment pas qu'on les occupe de choses d'un autre monde que le leur et qu'on les dérange; mais enfin me voilà sur ce terrain et j'y resterai." Rolland 1902 (trans. Clementina Black).

68 Dumollard's victims' bodies were photographed by the authorities in an early example of criminal photography; he too was photographed, in an early version of the criminal mugshot. Books were published on Dumollard's notorious story. His trial took place in January 1862 and he was executed at the guillotine that March.

69 The caption ran: "Dumolard [sic] enterrant sa quatorzième bonne." Bertall, *Le Journal Amusant*, 30 May 1863.

70 During the months of May, June, and July, Sensier sent Millet reviews of his work by Théophile Thoré, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, the dealer Arthur Stevens (under the pseudonym J. Graham), Théodore Pelloquet, Alexandre Dumas, Théophile Gautier, and Jules-Antoine Castagnary.

71 Millet to Sensier, 30 May 1863. "Il en est qui me disent que je nie les charmes de la campagne. J'y trouve bien plus que des charmes; d'infinies splendeurs. J'y vois, tout comme eux, les petites fleurs dont le Christ disait: 'Je vous assure que Salomon même, dans toute sa gloire, n'a jamais été vêtu comme l'une d'elles.' Je vois très bien les aureoles des pissenlits, et le soleil qui étale là-bas, bien loin par delà les pays, sa gloire dans les nuages. Je n'en vois pas moins dans la plaine, tout fumants, les chevaux qui labourent; puis, dans un endroit rocheux, un homme tout errené, dont on a entendu les han! depuis le matin, qui tâche de se redresser un instant pour souffler. Le drame est enveloppé de splendeurs." Sensier 1881, p. 242, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 157.

72 Millet to Théodore Pelloquet, 2 June 1863. "Encore un coup, si plus de gens croyaient ce que vous croyez, ils ne s'emploieraient pas aussi résolument à flatter le mauvais goût et les mauvaises passions à leur profit, sans aucun souci du bien." Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 131. For the importance of morality in Millet's work see Herbert 2007, p. 541.

73 Herbert 2007, p. 541.

74 Castagnary's articles in the *Courrier du Dimanche* on Courbet (July 5) and Millet (July 12) did not strictly say that Millet was a follower of Courbet, but Sensier interpreted them this way and incited Millet's response. Herbert 2002b, pp. 290–301.

75 "rustique [...] surtout touché de l'homme nativement voué au grand travail de la terre." Millet to Sensier, August 1863, in Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 138.

76 Millet to Sensier, August 1863. "On peut bien croire qu'un homme qui met une telle constance à vouloir exprimer toujours le même fonds d'idées, qui le fait en sachant les inimitiés que cela suscite, puisque c'est un peu troubler les heureux dans leur repos, qui le fait quoique pauvre, on peut bien croire que cet homme trouve en lui-même ce qui donne cette constance." Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 138.

77 Millet 1894, p. 912.

78 Bonnemère 1856, p. 376.

79 "Nonetheless, one day, I spent the whole day in front of the *Pastoral Concert* by Giorgione. I couldn't tear myself away." ("Un jour cependant je restais toute la journée devant le *Concert champêtre* de Giorgione; je ne m'en lassais pas.") Millet as recorded by Sensier, in Sensier 1881, p. 56. The painting was then believed to be by Giorgione but today is generally recognized to be by Titian.

80 "I remember waking one morning in my little bed and hearing the voices of people in the room. With the voices sounded a sort of *brrr*, which stopped now and then and began again. It was the sound of the spinning wheels, and the voices of the women spinning and carding wool." ("Je me rappelle m'être éveillé un matin, dans mon petit lit, en entendant des voix de gens qui causaient dans la chambre où j'étais. Parmi les voix, il se faisait un ronflement, qui s'interrompait de temps en temps. C'était le bruit d'un rouet, et les voix étaient celles des femmes qui filaient et cardaient la laine.") Millet as recorded by Sensier, in Sensier 1881, p. 14.

81 Bonnemère 1856, p. 372; Herbert 2002a, p. 38.

82 "engelures démocratiques." Bertall 1869, p. 3.

83 "badly flayed creatures" ("créatures

imparfaitement écorchées"). Leroy 1869 (27 May).

84 "la confiture de groseilles." Leroy 1869 (10 June).

85 Sensier 1869, p. 401.

86 Castagnary 1892, vol. 1, p. 356.

87 Huysmans 1887; Chennevières 1887; André Michel 1887.

88 See Salé 2006.

89 Millet often used different colored papers in these pastels, establishing varied ground colors, from tan to lilac to gray-blue.

90 See Herbert 1976, p. 161, for this comparison.

91 Huysmans 1887, p. 46.

92 "Aucun peintre, en aucune école, n'a poussé plus loin le soin et l'art des premiers plans. [...] Plus nettement encore que Théodore Rousseau, il a formulé cette loi de la largeur sommaire et solide des premiers plans, qui marque d'un cachet reconnaissable le paysage moderne." Burty 1877, pp. 308–9.

93 "si vous voyiez comme la forêt est belle! J'y cours quelquefois à la fin du jour et après ma journée, et j'en reviens chaque fois écrasée. C'est d'un calme, d'une grandeur épouvantables, au point que je me surprends ayant véritablement peur." Millet to Sensier, c. 1849, in Sensier 1881, p. 121, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 87.

94 Sheon 1971, pp. 434–55.

95 See Herbert 1976, p. 168.

96 Wheelwright 1876, p. 264.

97 This work is little known today since it was destroyed in Berlin in the Second World War, having been acquired fifty years earlier, in 1897, by the Nationalgalerie.

98 See Kelly 2008, p. 150.

99 Sensier to Millet, 9 April 1872 (DAG, Louvre, A3039).

100 "Chez la plupart des paysagistes, le sol est superficiel; chez Millet il est profond." Huysmans 1887, p. 46.

101 "Depuis, j'ai vu en mon pays bien des tempêtes, mais aucune ne m'a laissé comme celle-là l'image de la destruction, de la petitesse de l'homme et de la puissance des eaux." Millet as recorded by Sensier, in Sensier 1881, p. 32, trans. in Kay 1881, p. 38.

102 There were 142 views of the Manche shown at the Salon from 1817 to 1881. Few of these, however, represented the coast around Gruchy. Jon Whiteley, "Subject Index to Paintings Exhibited at the Paris Salon, 1673–1881" (1993, unpublished, deposited at Sackler Library, University of Oxford).

103 "C'est le triple portrait ému de ces trois éléments. Millet est arrivé à l'apogée de sa carrière [...]. Plus il simplifie, plus il touche." Théophile Silvestre to Monsieur Asselin, February 25, 1871, in Sensier 1881, p. 335.

104 "Couleur d'une puissance extraordinaire." Sensier 1881, p. 362.

105 "il rêvait comme le couronnement de son oeuvre." Tillot, introduction, in Millet 1875, p. viii.

106 Kelly 2015, pp. 70–71.

107 Durand-Ruel stock book, 1868–73, no. 1477: *Bergère filant (rec. 76)*, 10,000F, May 1872; no. 1478: *Femme à la quenouille (rec. 298)*, 6,000F, May 1872; no. 1961: *Une maison à Gréville*, 10,000F, September 23, 1872; no. 1869: *Femme à la lampe (rec. 20)*, August 20, 1872, 14,000F. The addition of the *recueil* (collection) numbers in the stock book, referencing the 1873 volume of Durand-Ruel's stock, enables us to identify *Bergère filant* (*Shepherdess Spinning*) as *In the Auvergne* (cat. 28); *Femme à la quenouille* (*Woman with a Distaff*) *as Shepherdess Seated in the Shade* (1872, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); and *Femme à la lampe* (*Woman with a Lamp*) as *Woman Sewing by Lamplight* (1870–72, Frick Collection, New York).

108 Durand-Ruel 1873.

109 This ran for exactly one month from 6 April to 6 May at the gallery of Francis Petit at 7 rue Saint-Georges in northern Paris. The show was intended to raise money for the family of the artist, and the catalogue was priced at 50 centimes. Millet had shown his pastels periodically in the 1860s in exhibitions outside the Salon, particularly in the space belonging to the Cercle de l'Union Artistique.

110 Millet 1875.

111 The state acquired fifteen drawings at the sale. In 1881, Mantz noted that four drawings were on view at the Musée du Luxembourg: *Bergère tricotant* (*Knitting Shepherdess*), *Bergère assise* (*Seated Shepherdess*), *Couseuses* (*Sewing Women*), and *Une église près de Cusset* (*A Church Near Cusset*). Sensier 1881, p. 350.

112 "ce fauve de l'art." Article dated 7 May 1881, in Eudel 1882, p. 135.

113 "que n'a-t-on pas vomi contre ce grand poète qui est presque mort de faim." Gauguin 1889, p. 84.

114 "Parmi cette pléiade de penseurs sans réclame, à l'instinct royal: Rousseau, Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Courbet, Manet, tous gens contredits à leur époque." Ibid.

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2 Millet and Impressionism

1 Burty 1875, p. 436.

2 The young Impressionists do not seem to have had any contact with Millet during their periods in the forest of Fontainebleau in the 1860s.

3 "I saw, several days ago, a sunset of a very particular nature and much of the season. I am going to try to capture the impression that I felt." ("J'ai vu, il y a quelques jours, un soleil couchant d'une nature très particulière et bien de la saison. Je vais m'efforcer de rendre l'impression qu j'en ai reçue.') Jean-François Millet to Emile Gavet, 1 December 1866, in Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 3, p. 13.

4 These dated from his 1854 and 1870 trips and were particularly noted in Charles Tillot's introduction, in Millet 1875, p. viii.

5 Tillot exhibited in 1876, 1877, 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1886.

6 "le meilleur paysage exposé." Descubes, 20 April 1877, cited in Berson 1996, p. 144.

7 "le grand Millet [...] cet Homère de la campagne moderne, qui regarda le soleil jusqu'à en devenir aveugle; qui a montré le paysan dans des labours comme un animal parmi les oeufs, les porcs et les moutons, qui a adoré la *terre* et l'a faite si ingénue, si noble, si rude et déjà couverte d'irradiations lumineuses." Duranty 1876, cited in Berson 1996, p. 75.

8 Kelly 2015, pp. 70–71.

9 See Brettell 2011; Pissarro 1993; Thomson 1990; Lacambre and Lepoittevin 2002, pp. 336–49.

10 Clark 1999, p. 116.

11 Burty wrote: "An effect of *Hoar Frost* by M. Pissarro recalls the appearance of the best Millets." ("Un effet de *Gelée blanche*, par M. Pissarro, rappelle la donnée des meilleurs Millet.") Burty 1874, p. 2.

12 "ignoble," Duret 1878, p. 10; "un simple guéret," ibid., p. 28.

13 "la vraie campagne." Camille Pissarro to Théodore Duret, 20 October 1874, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980, p. 95.

14 "Are you painting two- and four-legged beasts? Pure landscape is invaded from so many sides, but here is a gap to fill and continue in the line of Paul Potter, Cuyp, Troyon [and] Millet, while of course being modern and different." ("Avez-vous fait des bêtes bipèdes et quadrupèdes? Le paysage pur est envahi de tant de côtés qu'il y a une place à prendre et à tenir dans la ligne des Paul Potter, Cuyp, Troyon, Millet, bien entendu en étant moderne et autre.") Théodore Duret to Camille Pissarro, 14 December 1874, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980, p. 96.

15 The *Sower and Ploughman* (1875, private collection), *The Pond at Montfoucault* (1875, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham), and the *Goose Girl at Montfoucault* (1876, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston).

16 "J'ai aussi trouvé dans un coin, peinture à l'huile sur papier, un Breton bûcheron, cela a assez de qualité locale, c'est bien un peu Millet, mais à Montfoucault, ils ont cette allure." Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 5 November 1894, in Bailly-Herzberg 1988, p. 503.

17 "cet art morose." Camille Pissarro to Eugène Murer, August 1878, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980, p. 126.

18 This was recognized by Duret 1906, p. 66: "What Millet had yet been able to keep from former tradition, he [Pissarro] rejected it." ("Ce que Millet encore avait pu garder de l'ancienne tradition, il l'a, lui, rejeté.")

19 Brettell 2011, p. 184.

20 The following reviewers all compared Pissarro's work to that of Millet at the 1882 Impressionist Exhibition: Philippe Burty, Ernest Chesneau, Jacques de Biez, Henry Havard, Alexandre Hepp, André Michel, Henri Rivière, and Armand Sallanches. Armand Silvestre in Berson 1996, pp. 379–416.

21 "vraies femmes de Millet." Alexandre Hepp, 3 March 1882, cited in Berson 1996, p. 394.

22 "Ils me jettent Millet à la tête, mais Millet était biblique! Pour un hébreu, il me semble l'être peu, c'est curieux." Camille Pissarro to Théodore Duret, 12 March 1882, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980, p. 158.

23 J.-F. Millet, "Correspondance," *Le Figaro* (*Supplément littéraire*), 13th year, no. 18 (30 April 1887), pp. 70–71.

24 "Il avait l'allure trop biblique; encore un inconscient de la marche des idées modernes, soldat ou général aveugles, défendant sans le savoir, malgré lui, l'idée!!' Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 2 May 1887, in Bailly-Herzberg 1986, p. 157.

25 "une foule compacte." Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 16 May 1887, in Bailly-Herzberg 1986, p. 169.

26 "Sentimentalisme idiot." Ibid.

27 "Je détestais Millet. Ses paysans sentimentaux me faisaient penser à des acteurs déguisés en paysans." Renoir 1962, p. 73.

28 "fausse grandeur." Huysmans 1883, cited in Berson 1996, p. 397.

29 "certains dessins de Millet sont cent fois mieux que sa peinture qui a bien vieilli." Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 16 May 1887, in Bailly-Herzberg 1986, p. 169.

30 See Mantz 1887; Huysmans 1887. There were several examples of such views of expansive plains that Pissarro could have seen at the 1887 retrospective exhibition. In addition to *La Plaine*, there were the large-scale pastels: *Winter, the Plain of Chailly* (c. 1862–66, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum) and *Winter* (c. 1868, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon).

31 "It is the same for my peasants, which people used to say are done *à la* Millet; people have since realized their mistake: it is too full of sensation not to be obvious; only superficial people can confuse black and white." ("C'est comme mes paysans que l'on disait être du Millet, on en est bien revenu. C'est trop entier de sensation pour qu'on ne le voie pas, il n'y a que les gens superficiels pour confondre noir et blanc.") Camille Pissarro to Georges Pissarro, 17 December 1889, in Bailly-Herzberg 1986, p. 313. Trans. Joachim Pissarro in Pissarro 1993, p. 157.

32 Sickert 1947, p. 150.

33 Sickert 1892, pp. 136–37.

34 Lacambre 2002, p. 338. Caillebotte owned two of Millet's drawings (including *Man with Wheelbarrow*) that were gifted to France as part of his bequest.

35 "L'intérêt excité parmi les artistes qui cherchent leur voie eux-mêmes et qui ont de la sensibilité l'est trop vivement et l'applaudissement est trop général pour que cette exhibition reste stérile." Burty 1877, p. 277.

36 This can be identified as *A Peasant Girl Seated by a Haystack* (c. 1851–52, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris).

37 "tachés en peintre." Blanche 1919, p. 278. Degas's comment suggests that he did not favor Millet's paintings, and it is probable that he shared the preference widely held among the avant-garde by the 1880s for the artist's drawings and pastels.

38 *Madame J.-F. Millet, née Pauline Virginie Ono* (1841, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); *Two Studies of a Female Nude Raising her Arms* (62); *Small Figure Studies* (location unknown, formerly Henri Bénézit, 1960); and four woodcuts (*Digger at Rest*, *Digger at Work*, *Woman Emptying a Bucket* and *The Grand Shepherdess*; locations unknown; see Delteil 1906, nos. 31–34). Ives et al. 1997, p. 102. See also Laughton 1991.

39 Degas bought it at the sale of the collection of Millet's widow in 1894.

40 See for example Durand-Ruel's illustrated catalogue published in 1873, which included five prints after nude paintings by Millet.

41 Kendall 1993.

42 "I don't like this cow hidden by a rock and whose head only appears [fig. 45]. That reminds me too much of the Independents of this year. One of them, Degas, I think, exhibited two paintings [sic]. In one, on the banks of the Loire, a policeman was cut in two, top to bottom [*Physionomie de criminel*, private collection, sold at Sotheby's London, 24 June 2015]; in the other the hat of a lawyer rose up alone from the bottom [*Physionomie de criminel*, private collection]." ("Je n'aime pas cette vache masquée par un rocher et dont la tête seule paraît. Cela rappelle trop les Indépendants de cette année. L'un d'eux, Degas, je crois, exposait deux tableaux. Dans l'un, au bord de la Loire, un gendarme était coupé en deux et en long et, dans l'autre, la toque d'un avocat surgissait seule dans le bas." See Paul Eudel's review of the Hartmann sale, 7 May 1881, in Eudel 1882, p. 140.

43 See Degas's undated list of potential exhibitors to the 1879 Impressionist Exhibition ("Destrem/Raffaelli/Lhermitte/Cazin/Mme Bracquemond/['Clairin' canceled]") in Reff 1976, vol. 1, p. 136.

44 "comme Millet, il est le peintre de l'humble. Ce que le grand maître fit pour les champs, M. Raffaëlli le recommence pour les modestes de la vie Parisienne." Wolff 1881 in Berson 1996, p. 372.

45 Claude Monet, 9 October 1920, in Gimpel 1920, p. 151.

46 Rewald 1973, p. 96.

47 "il y a une vingtaine de belles toiles de Millet, et de Corot." Frédéric Bazille to his parents, end April 1867, in Schulman 1995, p. 356, no. 156.

48 "il n'y a de vraiment beaux que les tableaux de Millet et Corot." Frédéric Bazille to his father, 2 May 1869, in Schulman 1995, p. 373, no. 237.

49 Thanks to Isolde Pludermacher for this suggestion. Bazille's picture is principally indebted formally to *Sleep* (c. 1867–70, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, a painter whose art was strongly connected to Millet's and who was a visitor to Barbizon in the 1860s.

50 Callen 2000, pp. 177–78. Millet's palette in 1850 included earth colors such as mummy, burnt umber and burnt sienna. Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 1, p. 84.

51 See Eudel 1882 and Lostalot 1881.

52 For another example, see the pastel *Winter* (c. 1868) at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon. Millet also used haystacks as the setting for genre scenes like *Harvesters Resting* (cat. 18).

53 This late interest is also evident in the dappled light effect in *Shepherdess Seated in the Shade* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), from the early 1870s, suggesting that he may have responded to the example of the younger Impressionist generation.

54 See Callen 1987, pp. 168–71.

55 'la gravité, la solennité [...] les jeux de la lumière déterminés par la baguette magique des heures [...] l'homme est absent.' Alexandre 1921, pp. 94–95.

56 Reff 1962, p. 184.

57 Cézanne may also have known this work from the prints produced by Adrien Lavieille or H.-E. Lessore. See Reff and Shoemaker 1989, p. 165.

58 Reff 1960, p. 304.

59 "A revolution is needed for nature to be rediscovered [...]. Rousseau, Daubigny, Millet [...]The rhetoric of landscape is created, a language, effects which are passed on." Paul Cézanne cited in Kendall 1988, p. 304.

60 "As for the word classical (so useful in the manifestoes and doctrines of Post-Impressionism), no painter embodies it better than Millet." ("Le mot classique (si utile dans les manifestes et les doctrines de post-impressionisme), nul peintre qui ne le portât mieux que Millet.") Blanche 1919, p. 269.

61 "Isn't Poussin another avant-garde ambassador, an ancestor to Jean-François?" ("Poussin, autre nom-bouclier d'avant-garde, n'est'il pas un ancêtre de Jean-François?") Blanche 1919, p. 269.

62 See, for example, Tinterow and Loyrette 1994, where only a single work by Millet (*Woman Pasturing Her Cow*, 1858) was included in the catalogue entries (but not in the exhibition), as opposed to nine paintings by Courbet, three by Corot, three by Daubigny, and two by Rousseau.

63 See Van Dijk 2016.

64 "Grand Millet." Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 2 May 1887, in Bailly-Herzberg 1986, p. 157.

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3 "That Great Poet": Millet and the Post-Impressionists

1 See Herbert 1976; Bacou 1975, pp. 38–43; and Lepoittevin and Lacambre 2002 for this understanding of Millet's oeuvre.

2 Presumably, Millet's outrageous *Man with a Hoe*, shown at the 1863 Salon, prompted this attack.

3 "il ne dessine plus des figures, il trace des synthèses." Paul de Saint-Victor, cited in Bacou 1975, p. 42.

4 For a list of these sales and exhibitions, and a thorough analysis of their impact on the perception of Millet by late nineteenth-century painters, see Fratello 2001.

5 "a simplifié le dessin, éliminé les particularités secondaires, agrandi les silhouettes, élargi les horizons. Cette méthode, qui confie un beau rôle à la pensée, ne lui a pas été mauvaise. Millet a été abréviateur et synthétique." Mantz 1887, p. 35.

6 "Millet était un synthétiste." Hüe 1889, p. 219.

7 On Synthetism as a style in the nineteenth century see Blanc 1867 and Aurier 1891. For a summary of the style and its influences see Rookmaaker 1959.

8 "cette influence directe et dominatrice." Journal entry dated 15 October 1867, in Redon 1922, p. 33, translated in Redon 1986, p. 27.

9 "Il chercha et trouva dans le plein air un monde absolument nouveau. Il donna la vie morale aux nuées. Les arbres et toute la nature inanimée de la campagne vivent de la vie de l'homme. [...] Il y a dans cette page une poésie vraiment nouvelle." Redon 1922, p. 139, translated in Redon 1986, pp. 120–21. Chantal Georgel recently discovered that this essay from Redon's journal was also published during his lifetime, in the 23 April 1878 issue of *L'Art moderne*. See Georgel 2014, p. 358, and Vanhaesebroucke 2016, p. 43.

10 "J. F. Millet reste le maître à la fois & du 'Biblisme' et de l'Érotisme." Letter from Félicien Rops to Théo Hannon, 8 November 1882, see Rops 1882.

11 Weisberg 1973, p. 105.

12 See Piedagnel 1876, n.p.

13 Bonnier and Carpiaux 2009, pp. 48 and 92.

14 "paysages synthétiques." Peladan 1888, p. 53, cited in Marlais 1992, p. 74.

15 See Aurier 1891, p. 215.

16 Aurier Archives, cited in Mathews 1984, p. 431, n. 30.

17 For the comparison of Millet's and Puvis's "naturalisme rustique," see Vachon 1895, pp. 115–19. Vachon actually rejects this comparison, arguing that Millet's work focused on individual expression, while Puvis's focus was universal.

18 Petrie 1997, p. 52. Petrie suggests that had Millet lived to complete his portion of the Panthéon murals, his influence on Puvis might be less in question. See also Price 2010, vol. 1, p. 88.

19 Price 2010, vol. 1, p. 57.

20 Ibid. Puvis probably met Millet and other Barbizon painters through his artist friend Léon Belly.

21 Price 2010, vol. 1, p. 106.

22 See Price 2010, vol. 2, p. 268, who mentions both David's *Death of Bara* (1794, Musée Calvet, Avignon) and Bazille's painting as earlier examples of the pose. She also notes the related awkward rendering of the figures in Millet's and Puvis's works. On Bazille's painting, which was influenced by both Millet and Puvis, see Schulman 1995, p. 222.

23 Laughton 1979a, p. 706.

24 Petrie 1997, p. 52; Laughton 1979a, p. 705. Laughton cites the American painter Will H. Low's account of his visit with Millet's son François, stating that *Hagar and Ishmael* was painted over and remained so until 1885.

25 Fratello 2003, pp. 690–91.

26 See Vachon 1895, p. 115, and Neff 1969, p. 77.

27 Price 2010, vol. 2, pp. 239–47. See also Aimée Brown Price's essay "The Poor Fisherman ...," in Price 1994, pp. 45–53. Puvis's drawings were often more closely related to Millet than were his paintings. In fact, his sketch for the mural *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, was originally attributed to Millet. See Jon Whiteley, "The Role of Drawing," in Price 1994, p. 31, and Prat 1980, pp. 38–40, 85.

28 See Smith 1997, pp. 9–21; Thomson 1985, pp. 114–16; and Zimmermann 1991, pp. 78–82.

29 Thomson 1985, p. 30, and Zimmermann 1991, p. 78.

30 Herbert 1958, p. 150.

31 Zimmermann 1991, p. 79.

32 Herbert 1958, p. 150. See also Herbert 2001, especially pp. 59–60, 70–72, 78.

33 Monique Nonne, "Jean-François Millet e i neoimpressionisti," in Bocquillon 2008, p. 73.

34 Elizabeth C. Childs, "Seeking the Studio of the South: Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Avant-Garde Identity," in Homburg 2001, p. 137. On the artist colony at Pont-Aven and the changes facing Brittany in the nineteenth century, see Delouche 2011; Jacobs 1985, pp. 42–87; and Le Paul 1987.

35 Paul Gauguin, "Notes on Art at the Universal Exposition" and "Who is Being Deceived Here?" in Gauguin 1990, pp. 28–31 and 34–35.

36 "ce grand poète" and "cette pléiade de penseurs sans réclame." Gauguin 1889, p. 84.

37 "Je sens qu'il est plus Millet que moi." Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 4 or 5 October 1888, letter 697.

38 Druick and Zegers 2001, pp. 190–94.

39 "Van Gogh eut-il de l'influence sur Gauguin, je ne le pense pas; tout au contraire lui se souvient de Millet et Pissarro ou pour mieux dire de Pissarro qui s'est souvent inspire de Millet." Séguin 1903, p. 164.

40 Gauguin mentions Millet in a letter to Pissarro in 1882, but the context of the letter is unknown. See Gauguin 1984, pp. 28–29.

41 Wildenstein 2002, vol. 1, p. 268.

42 Ophélie Ferlier-Bouat, in Groom 2017, p. 118. The image of the Breton shepherdess appeared in pastel studies, paintings, and ceramic works from his time in the atelier of Ernest Chaplet in 1886–87, and on a pair of carved wooden clogs which Gauguin gave to Emile Schuffenecker.

43 Lepoittevin 1990, p. 71.

44 Dorra 2007, p. 62.

45 Herbert 1976, p. 9.

46 Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers suggest that if Gauguin had not seen the actual pastel (which had been exhibited in the Gavet sale), or the illustration of it in Sensier's biography, it is likely that Van Gogh would have easily been able to describe it to him. See Druick and Zegers 2001, pp. 190–94.

47 For Millet's fatalism see Herbert 1976, pp. 11 and 165.

48 "le *Grand poète des lignes et des valeurs*." Bernard, "Au Palais des Beaux-Arts. Notes sur la peinture," 1889, in Bernard 1994, p. 11.

49 "Millet est un maitre. [...] il possède la rare beauté des nuances de sentiment et des valeurs d'âme." Bernard, "Sur l'art et sur les maîtres," 1922, in Bernard 1994, p. 294.

50 Ibid.

51 *The Buckwheat Harvest* is thought to have been conceived of as a pendant to Bernard's major Synthetist painting *Breton Women in the Meadow* (1888), as the two canvases have roughly the same size, shape, and compositional structure. MaryAnne Stevens suggests that Bernard may have used the two paintings as a pairing depicting peasant leisure and labor. See Stevens 1990, p. 146. This dichotomy of peasant life also has parallels in the work of Millet, with his numerous depictions of resting and working peasants.

52 See Lemonedes et al. 2010 for a reconstruction of the Volpini Exhibition and identifications of the works shown. See also Siberchicot 2010.

53 Osado 1889, cited in Lemonedes et al. 2010, p. 207.

54 Boyle 1980, p. 4.

55 Sérusier 1950, pp. 7–14. He did, however, also discuss moving away from the traditional uses of color and chiaroscuro that had dominated art since the Renaissance, and included the Barbizon landscapists, and Millet specifically, in this group. Ibid., p. 26.

56 The stacks have been alternately identified as grainstacks or seaweed. Their reddish hue suggests buckwheat, but other contemporary paintings, including Gauguin's *Kelp Gatherers* from 1889, show Breton peasants harvesting red-toned seaweed from the ocean.

4 Van Gogh and "Père Millet"

1 Letter 493, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, 13 April 1885. All quotations from Van Gogh's letters are from Van Gogh Letters 2009. I have made grateful use for this essay of the *Millet / Van Gogh* catalogue for the exhibition of the same name at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris (Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998), the revised version of the publication that accompanied the exhibition *Van Gogh and Millet* at the Van Gogh Museum (Van Tilborgh et al. 1988). I would especially like to thank Louis van Tilborgh and Teio Meedendorp for their invaluable comments and advice during the writing of this text.

2 Letter 841, Vincent van Gogh to Willemien van Gogh, Saint-Rémy, 20 January 1890.

3 Letter 17, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, London, early January 1874, and letter 55, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Paris, 11 October 1875. He was still referring to Millet's painting in May 1885, despite not having seen it by that point "in 10 or 12 years" (letter 500). Van Gogh's 1883 drawing of a church in Drenthe (*Shepherd with Flock by a Church in Zweeloo*, private collection) was inspired by *The Church at Gréville*, while the figure of the man with a spade in the first configuration of his painting *Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church in Nuenen* of 1884–85 (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) and the drawing that preceded it (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo) was borrowed from Millet's painting. Van Tilborgh and Vellekoop 1999, p. 62; Meedendorp 2007, p. 243.

4 Letter 36, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Paris, 29 June 1875.

5 Van Gogh would not have been present at the big auction on 10 and 11 May of work owned by Millet at the time of his death in January, as he was still in London on 8 May (see letter 33).

6 Letter 157, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Cuesmes, 7 September 1880.

7 *The Angelus (after Millet)* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo) and two sheets after *The Diggers* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, and private collection).

8 Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, p. 32; Meedendorp 2007, pp. 312–15, 323–29.

9 See Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, pp. 16–29, and the essays "Millet and Impressionism" and "'That Great Poet': Millet and the Post-Impressionists" in this publication.

10 Parsons and McWilliam 1984.

11 Letter 210, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, 11 March 1882.

12 "Millet était un coeur mélancolique et souffrant, mais il était avant tout un homme fort de ses convictions: fidèle et fier dans sa religion et dans son art, il leur vouait les douceurs de son âme, son repos et jusqu'à sa vie que la dureté des temps n'a que trop abrégée. [...] Sa vie fut celle d'un sage, d'un travailleur courageux, d'un père aimant et d'un camerade dévoué." Sensier 1881, p. viii, trans. in Kay 1881, pp. ix–x.

13 Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, pp. 35–41.

14 Letter 493, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, 13 April 1885 (emphasis in original).

15 Millet quoted in Sensier 1881, p. 157. trans. in Kay 1881 p. 111.

16 Letter 288, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, 26 and 27 November 1882.

17 Letter 356, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, 22 June 1883; Van Tilborgh and Vellekoop 1999, pp. 52–53; Sensier 1881, p. 180. The painted sketch is *Potato Grubbers* (private collection).

18 In addition to the sketch of potato grubbers mentioned above, Van Gogh painted six images of rural labors in different seasons, the motifs and intent of which were inspired by Millet. See Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, pp. 74–78, and Ten Berge et al. 2003, pp. 68–71.

19 Letter 497, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, 30 April 1885. Van Gogh based his use of color on the theory he had studied in Charles Blanc's book *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867). See Van Tilborgh and Vellekoop 1999, pp. 136–45, and Ten Berge et al. 2003, pp. 105–10.

20 Letter 503, Anthon van Rappard to Vincent van Gogh, Utrecht, 24 May 1885.

21 Letter 499, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 2 May 1885 (emphasis in original). Sensier quoted Gautier on p. 127 (Sensier 1881).

22 Letter 515, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 14 July 1885. Cf. also letters 428 and 495.

23 Letter 628, Vincent van Gogh to Emile Bernard, Arles, on or about 19 June 1888.

24 Mantz 1887.

25 "cherchant la mélodie avant tout et ne permettant jamais à la couleur de parler trop haut" (seeking melody above all and never allowing color to speak too loudly); "manière rugueuse," "des couches superposées à l'infini," "d'indéchiffrables énigmes." Mantz 1887, pp. 15–16, 25.

26 See the essay "Millet and Impressionism".

27 Letter 428, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 3 February 1884.

28 Van Gogh knew Daubigny's *Spring* (1857) from the Musée du Luxembourg, where Millet's painting of the same name (1868–73) was also on view from 1887.

29 Letter 629, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 21 June 1888.

30 Van Tilborgh et al. 1988, p. 162.

31 Letter 628, Vincent van Gogh to Emile Bernard, Arles, on or about 19 June 1888.

32 Letter 634, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, on or about 28 June 1888. See also Van Tilborgh 1998, pp. 90–105, and Ten Berge et al. 2003, pp. 233–37.

33 Letter 664, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 19 or 20 August 1888, and letter 676, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 8 September 1888.

34 Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and Hahnloser/Jaeggli Stiftung, Winterthur.

35 Druick and Zegers 2001, p. 217; Van Heugten 2008, pp. 70–77.

36 Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon* (1888, National Galleries of Scotland) and the Hiroshige print of which Van Gogh had made a painted copy in Paris (*Flowering Plum Orchard (after Hiroshige)*, 1887, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) are frequently cited as sources for the composition with the diagonal tree. Van Tilborgh 1998, pp. 102–3, 105, n. 45; Druick and Zegers 2001, p. 217. Cf. Van Tilborgh et al. 2018, pp. 77–78.

37 Letter 673, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 3 September 1888.

38 "le type même de la chose, toujours comme dans la Bible ou dans Homère. Et vraiment, il a de la grandeur, à force de simplicité." Thoré 1870, p. 100.

39 Letter 298, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, 3 January 1882 (emphasis in original).

40 Private collection, and Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo.

41 Van Gogh's paintings of prints after Millet included ten copies after *The Labors of the Fields*: *Reaper*, *Reaper with a Scythe*, *Woman Binding Sheaves*, *Woman with a Rake*, *The Sheaf-Binder*, *Woman Bruising Flax*, *Thresher*, *Sheepshearers*, *Woman Spinning*, and *The Woodcutter*. It was probably in this period too that he painted the copy after Millet's *Shepherdess*. He then worked on *The Diggers*, *Evening*, *The End of the Day*, and *The Sower* (see letter 816). Van Gogh also painted *Morning: Going Out to Work* and *Noon: Rest*, which together with *The End of the Day* and *Evening* formed the series *The Four Times of the Day*. In January 1890 he painted *Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow* and *The First Steps*, and in February *The Sower*. See Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, pp. 120–59; Pilz et al. 2013.

42 Letter 801, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy, 10 September 1889.

43 Letter 805, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy, on or about 20 September 1889.

44 Ibid. See Pilz et al. 2013, p. 115, n. 57 for a list of the works linked to his copies that Van Gogh had seen at the 1887 exhibition.

45 1862–63, The Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums; 1864, Fogg Museum, Harvard Arts Museums, Cambridge, MA. Van Gogh had seen the Glasgow pastel at the exhibition for the Gavet auction in 1875, and the painting at the Paris retrospective in 1887.

46 Letter 815, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 25 October 1889, and letter 816, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 3 November 1889; Van Tilborgh and Salé 1998, pp. 149–56.

47 Letter 839, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 13 January 1890.

48 Pilz et al. 2013, pp. 113–15, 131. The grid is visible on *Winter: The Plain of Chailly* (134) and on several of the other prints after Millet in the Van Gogh Museum collection.

49 Letter 805, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 20 September 1889.

50 Pilz et al. 2013, p. 122.

51 Letter 804, Vincent van Gogh to Willemien van Gogh, 19 September 1889.

52 Letter 805, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 20 September 1889, and letter 810, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 8 October 1889.

53 Letter 839, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 13 January 1890.

54 Letter 863, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 29 April 1890.

55 Letter 838, Theo van Gogh to Vincent van Gogh, 8 January 1890.

56 Letter 839, Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 13 January 1890.

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5 Millet Worldwide: The Artist's Global Impact before 1900

1 Segantini, Morbelli, Ring, and Inness showed in the national exhibitions of their respective countries in 1889. Millet, for his part, showed thirteen paintings and thirty drawings.

2 Le Men 2002.

3 See Braun 1887 and Braun 1896. See also Pohlmann and Mellenthin 2017. Braun photographed a range of Millet's paintings, pastels, and drawings; 47 photographs were listed for sale, with prices from five to ten francs each, at the end of Sensier's biography (Sensier 1881, pp. 403–4). Braun listed 94 photographs, priced from five to fifteen francs, in his own 1887 catalogue (Braun 1887, pp. 469–70). He increased this number to 197 photographs by 1896 (Braun 1896, 439–44); these ranged from five francs up to sixty francs for a grand-format photograph of *The Gleaners* in the Louvre.

4 William Morris Hunt bought *The Sower* in 1851, and Martin Brimmer the *Harvesters Resting* in 1853. The latter in particular was

regularly exhibited in Boston in the ensuing years, especially in exhibitions at the Boston Athenaeum, appearing there as early as 1854. See Murphy 1984. For the broader reception of Millet in America, see Meixner 1983; Meixner 1995; Georgel et al. 2017.

5 Pludermacher 2017, p. 41.

6 Hirshler 2012, pp. 71–83.

7 Homer's close friend the landscapist Joseph Foxcroft Cole remembered: "The first French pictures I remember seeing in Boston were [...] the 'Harvesters' of Millet owned by Martin Brimmer [...] and a large Lambinet [...]. The above-named pictures made a great impression on me [...] I had only to see the French work to set me wild." See Hirshler 2012, p. 71. Another of Homer's friends, the writer Eugene Benson, described Millet as "the greatest living genre painter, the sincerest and largest poet in art" (Benson 1872, p. 404). Homer also knew Helena de Kay, translator of Sensier's biography of Millet, and had painted her portrait in 1872.

8 Cikovsky and Kelly 1995, pp. 48–49.

9 A condescending equation was made between French peasants and African Americans by Eugene Benson: "The peasant of France [...] is a careless and unambitious being, much like the negro of our Southern plantations." Benson quoted in Cikovsky and Kelly 1995.

10 See Hirshler 2012, p. 82, who writes, "*The Fog Warning* [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston], painted in Maine in 1885, is Homer's *Sower.*"

11 "Winslow Homer's 'Saco Bay', a study of a wave breaking on the Maine coast, is cold and hard in color, with an unnatural strawberry sky, but full of power." Anon. 1897.

12 The other two drawings showed a woman shearing sheep, and the dynamic form of a man gathering grain. See Herdrich and Weinberg 2000, pp. 136–38.

13 John Singer Sargent to Vernon Lee, 24 March 1882, in Charteris 1927, p. 56.

14 Among these collectors were William H. Vanderbilt of New York, Henry C. Gibson of Philadelphia, and William T. Walters of Baltimore.

15 George Inness to George W. Sheldon, in Sheldon 1879, pp. 34–35.

16 Millet as recorded in Sensier. William Morris Hunt wrote of Millet's works that they have "Infinity behind them." Smith 1903, p. 71.

17 As early as 1867, Inness was described as a "disciple of Swedenborg". Bell 2003, p. 25.

18 The painting was purchased between 1884 and 1887 by the Baltimore collector William Walters and could, in theory, have been seen by Inness.

19 Childe Hassam to Roland Knoedler, 11 March 1917, cited in Bell 2003, p. 100.

20 Bermingham 1975, pp. 67–68. The painting was, however, probably made before Inness arrived in France.

21 See Meyer 2011 and Krüger, 2013.

22 "notre maître à nous tous." Max Liebermann to Albert Komman, New Year's Eve 1890. Landesarchiv Berlin, Rep. 241, Acc. 1419, no. 7.

23 Liebermann 1889, pp. 480–82.

24 Liebermann may have known the heliogravure reproduction of *Woman Spinning* (28) that appeared in Sensier 1881 (opposite p. 320).

25 Liebermann 1889, pp. 480–82.

26 Liebermann, the critic Julius Meier-Graefe, and the patron Harry Graf Kessler were also responsible for bringing Manet and French Impressionism to Germany.

27 For Israels, see De Leeuw et al. 1983.

28 Bionda 2017, no. 60, p. 211.

29 Salé 1998, pp. 25–27, who also references the responses of the Symbolist Jean Delville and the sculptor Constantin Meunier.

30 Verhaeren 1887, pp. 189–90.

31 "indéniable théâtralité", Van de Velde 1891, p. 61. See also Kelly 2014.

32 The young Ring had the opportunity to see Millet's picture at Charlottenborg Palace in Copenhagen [which today houses the Kunsthal Charlottenborg] in 1879. His *Evening. Death and the Old Woman* of 1887 showed strong echoes of Millet's painting.

33 See Larsen et al. 2006; Berman 2007; and Berman 2011.

34 Peter Hertz, *Maleren L. A. Ring 1854–1933*, Copenhagen 1934, p. 142.

35 The conservative Danish prime minister (Konseilspræsident) J. B. S. Estrup. Laurits Andersen Ring in an interview, "L. A. Ring om sin Kunst [L. A. Ring on His Art]," in the newspaper *Politiken*, 1 October 1924, cited in Larsen et al. 2006, p. 26.

36 Madsen 1884, pp. 513–26, 527–31.

37 "un Millet italien," in Thiébault-Sisson 1899. See also Quinsac 2002 and Greene 2005, pp. 60-62 and 90-92.

38 Quinsac 2002, p. 357.

39 Stutzer et al 1999, p. 76.

40 William Ritter, as quoted in Villari 1901, p. 67, see also Greene 2005, p. 106.

41 "[U]n'arte piena di serenità e di calma che, come raggio di sole, venisse a dissipare le tenebre portando la luce, la vita, l'amore." Segantini 1891, p. 161, quoted in Segantini et al. 2011, p. 145.

42 Stutzer et al. 1999, p. 75.

43 Sensier 1881, p. 125.

44 "Les Glaneuses", no. 518, in Lille 1889, p. 16.

45 See Rood 1879.

46 As Rood noted, violet is the complementary of 'green-yellow' in terms of relative luminosity rather than red, the pigment complementary of green. See Rood's diagram of color contrasts (fig. 120) in Rood 1881

47 Fraquelli 2008, pp. 149–50.

48 Robins 2003, pp. 85–89.

49 Sickert 1892, p. 137, quoted in Daniels 2002, p. 58.

50 Sickert to the editor, *The New Age*, 8 September 1910, p. 452, quoted in Daniels 2002, p. 58.

51 For Argentina, see Costa 2005; for Eastern Europe, see Theinhardt 2002; and for Japan, see Marquet 2002.

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6 Exalted and Monumental: Appreciation of Millet around 1900

1 McWilliam 1999, p. 444.

2 See also the essays "Millet and Impressionism" and "Millet and the Post-Impressionists" in this book.

3 See also the essay "'This Artistic Fauve': Millet as a Modern Artist" in this book.

4 "c'est le côté humain, franchement humain, qui me touche le plus en art." Millet to Sensier, 1 February 1851, in Sensier 1881, p. 130. See also the essay "'This Artistic Fauve'" in this book.

5 McWilliam 1999, p. 438.

6 For the United States and Argentina, see for example Meixner 1982 and Malosetti Costa 2005, pp. 43–52.

7 Zemel 1997, p. 65.

8 Polistena 2008, p. 42.

9 See the essay "'This Artistic Fauve'" in this book.

10 See Patry 2014–15, p. 200

11 Brown Price 2010, pp. 242–43.

12 Stutzer and Wäspe 1999, p. 19.

13 Julius Meier-Graefe, "Beiträge zu einer modernen Ästhetik," *Die Insel* 1 (1899), p. 215.

14 See also Van Dijk 2015, p. 202.

15 The text was not published as a book until 1963 but was nevertheless known from an early stage within artists' circles, see Dalí 1963. The only text that Dalí published on this subject in the 1930s was "Interprétation paranoïaque-critique de l'image obsédante de l'*Angélus* de Millet," *Minotaure* 1 (1933), pp. 65–67.

16 Rotterdam 1970, cat. 27, and Diego 2018, p. 141. Dalí later wrote of Millet's "erotic cannibalism": Dalí in *Oui* 2 (1971), pp. 160–61; see also Descharnes 1990, p. 196. Citation from Ades 2004–5, p. 198.

17 Ades 2004–5, p. 238.

18 Dalí 1993, p. 64.

19 "Vorläufer einer neuen Zeit." Von Reber 1884, p. 26. See also Meyer 2009, p. 41.

20 "Millet war ein grosser Synthetiker." Meier-Graefe 1904, p. 110. See also Moffett 1973, p. 57.

21 "Millet war Bauer in demselben vollkommenen Sinne." Meier-Graefe 1904, p. 107.

22 "Millet stammte aus dem Volke. Er kannte aus eigener Erfahrung die Arbeiten des Feldes, die das Gesicht Braun machen und die Hände schwielig. Auch in Barbizon lebte er wie ein Bauer [...] Er verkehrte mit Bauern [...] wie Ein Mensch." Muther 1907, p. 34.

23 "Darin liegt seine Grösse, dass er als erster solche Menschen malte, die nicht Himmel und Hölle, nur Erde und Arbeit kennen. Unsere Zeit hat keine Götter mehr." Ibid., p. 42.

24 See for example Walther Gensel, *Millet und Rousseau*, Bielefeld/Leipzig 1902 (Velhagen & Klasing, Künstlermonographien no. 57); Ernst Diez, *Jean François Millet*, Bielefeld/Leipzig 1912 (Velhagen & Klasing,

Volksbücher no. 32); and Johannes Rath, "Millet als Ethiker," *Ethische Kultur* 15 (1907), pp. 34–36.

25 Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher: von einem Deutschen*, Leipzig 1890. Julius Meier-Graefe, *Vincent van Gogh: Der Roman eines Gottsuchers*, Munich 1921.

26 Meyer 2009, p. 71.

27 "Millet ist eigentlich kein Linien- sondern ein Flächen-Künstler. Daraus fliesst seine grosse Ruhe, das Epische seiner Bilder. Das ist seine Originalität. Er vereinfacht, weil er nur die grossen, ruhigen Massen sieht, und alles andre weglässt." Paris, 28 June 1895, in Kessler 2004a, p. 371.

28 "Ich möchte Millet und Corot mit ihren Hauptwerken zu den grossen Meistern der religiösen Kunst, wie die van Eyckes, rechnen." Paris, 4 June 1898, in Kessler 2004b, p. 149.

29 Meyer 2009, pp. 35–36.

30 Amic 2009, p. 32.

31 See Dorothee Hansen, "Paul Durand-Ruel et l'Allemagne", in Patry 2014–15, pp. 122, 124.

32 "einen ganz Grossen". Von Tschudi 1900. See also Meyer 2009, p. 48.

33 "Es gibt ebenso viel Arten von Beeinflussungen [...] Für sie ist Millet der Bauermaler." Meier-Graefe 1899, p. 199.

34 Herbert 1995–96, p. 14.

35 Lübbren 2001, p. 3.

36 Letter of 9 November 1889, in Altmann and Noeres 1989, p. 253. See also Lübbren 2001, p. 127.

37 Otto Modersohn, diary entry, 11 August 1889, in Altmann and Noeres 1989, p. 245. See also Lübbren 2001, p. 127.

38 "Ein Mann auf dem Felde, der sich die Jacke anzieht, gegen helle Abendluft, das war für mich das Schönste." Paula Modersohn-Becker, diary entry, 17 January 1900, in Modersohn-Becker 2007, p. 218.

39 "Les capacités techniques (picturales) de Millet ne sont pas très grandes, mais il possède le troisième et second caractère [imagination et puissance poétique] à un très haut degré." Feher 1960. See also Amic 2009, p. 31.

40 "um Klarheit zu gewinnen. Aber auch, um manches zu wissen, damit ich es in der Eigenen Kunst vermeiden konnte." Nolde 1931, p. 130. See also Schröter 1955, p. 322.

41 "Van Gogh hat Millet erkannt. [...] Van Gogh hat das aus ihm gewonnen, was auch einer Zukunft, die in die Gefahr kommen kann, Millet zu unterschätzen, wertvoll sein wird." Meier-Graefe 1899, p. 216.

42 Bätschmann et al. 2012, p. 159.

43 Clegg 2008, p. 355.

44 Ammann et al. 2008, p. 22

45 "Ich habe ein famoses Modell gefunden und die Arbeit ist bereits im Fluss. Ein spähender Bauer auf gepflügten Feld." Letter from Albin Egger-Lienz to Laura Lienz, 27 July 1903, in Kirschl 1996, p. 81.

46 English translation of Russian quotation in Dorontchenkov 2009, p. 28.

47 Boersma 1997, p. 28.

48 Crone and Moos 1991, p. 74.

49 "Monet, Courbet, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Millet, the boor Cézanne, and the even more boorish Picasso and Marinetti (not to mention us homegrown boors). And [Dmitry] Merezhkovsky stands in the square of our new century, among the mad whirl of motors in heaven on earth, watching with crazed eyes, still holding the bone of Caesar, and screams of beauty." Kazimir Malevich, letter to Alexandre Benois, May 1916, in Vakar and Mikhienko 2015, p. 83.

50 Malevich 2003, p. 36.

51 Ibid., p. 60.

52 Milner 1996, p. 35.

53 Galassi and McCully 2011, pp. 251–53.

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List of Exhibited Works

Works marked with an • are only included in the exhibition in the Saint Louis Art Museum. Works marked with an * are only included in the exhibition in the Van Gogh Museum.

Frédéric Bazille (1841–1870)

Ruth and Boaz, c. 1870
Oil on canvas, 137.5 × 202.8 cm
Musée Fabre, Montpellier Mediterannée Métropole

Emile Bernard (1868–1941)

The Harvest, 1888
Oil on canvas, 56.4 × 45.1 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906)

Seated Peasant, 1900–04
Oil on canvas, 73.3 × 60.3 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The Reaper (after Millet), page XVII (recto) from sketchbook II, after 1879
Graphite on paper, 21.6 × 12.7 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg, 1987

Salvador Dalí (1904–1989)

Gala and the Angelus of Millet Immediately Preceding the Arrival of the Conic Anamorphoses, 1933
Oil on panel, 24.2 × 19.2 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Purchased 1975

Meditation on the Harp, c. 1933 •
Oil on canvas, 66.7 × 47 cm
The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida
Gift of A. Reynolds and Eleanor Morse

Portrait of Gala, 1935 •
Oil on wood, 32.4 × 26.7 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1937

Edgar Degas (1834–1917)

Breakfast after the Bath, 1894
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 104 × 68.5 cm
Triton Collection Foundation

Alfred Delauney (1830–1894)

Winter: The Plain of Chailly (after Millet), 1862–80 *
Etching and graphite on cardboard, 29.4 × 42.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Albin Egger-Lienz (1868–1926)

The Spring, 1924 *
Oil on wood, 55 × 78 cm
Hainz Collection, Vienna

Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)

The Breton Shepherdess, 1886
Oil on canvas, 60.4 × 73.3 cm
Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Newcastle upon Tyne
Bequest of Mrs. D.M. Fulford via The Art Fund, 1945

Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890)

Man Winding Yarn, 1884 *
Gouache on paper, 44.8 × 35.4 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Sower, 1888
Oil on canvas, 32.5 × 40.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Sower, 1888
Oil on canvas, 64.2 × 80.3 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

Starry Night over the Rhône, 1888 •
Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 92 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kahn-Sriber, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Fernand Moch, 1975

The Reaper (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 43.5 × 25 cm
Private collection, Larry Ellison

The Sheepshearer (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 43.5 × 29.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Thresher (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 44 × 27.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Evening (after Millet), 1889
Oil on canvas, 74.5 × 93.5 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Siesta (after Millet), 1889–90 *
Oil on canvas, 73 × 91 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Gift of Mrs. Fernand Halphen, born Koenigswarter, 1952

Vineyards at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 65.1 × 80.3 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Funds given by Mrs. Mark C. Steinberg 8:1953

Stairway at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 50 × 70.5 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Museum Purchase 1:1935

Evening, The End of the Day
(after Millet), 1889–90 *
Oil on canvas, 72 × 94 cm
Menard Art Museum, Komaki, Japan

Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow
(after Millet), 1890
Oil on canvas, 72.1 × 92 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Sower (after Millet), 1881
Pencil, pen and brush in ink, and watercolor on paper, 48.1 × 36.7 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Sower, 1881
Black chalk on paper, 55.9 × 33.2 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo,
The Netherlands

Peasant Woman Digging, 1885 *
Black chalk on paper, 44.2 × 55.6 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

Peasant Woman Binding Wheat Sheaves, 1885 *
Black chalk on paper, 44.4 × 52.6 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo,
The Netherlands

Peasant Woman Gleaning, 1885
Black chalk on paper, 52.5 × 37.9 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo,
The Netherlands

Peasant Woman Gleaning, 1885 *
Black chalk and gouache on paper,
52.2 × 43.2 cm
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo,
The Netherlands

Natalia Gontcharova (1881–1962)

Planting Potatoes, 1908-09 •
Oil on canvas, 111 × 131 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain,
Strasbourg

Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918)

Portrait of an Unknown Man
(Sitting Winegrower), c. 1887
Oil on canvas, 55 × 38 cm
Kunsthaus Zürich, 1912

The Reaper, 1909
Oil on canvas, 82 × 105.5 cm
Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte,
Winterthur

Winslow Homer (1836–1910)

The Bright Side, 1865
Oil on canvas, 32.4 × 43.2 cm
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd

The Return of the Gleaner, 1867
Oil on canvas, 61 × 45.7 cm
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,
Bentonville, Arkansas
2010.14

Saco Bay, 1896 *
Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 96.4 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute,
Williamstown, Massachusetts

George Inness (1825–1894)

Moonrise, 1888
Oil on canvas, 73.6 × 111.7 cm
Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, New York

After a Summer Shower, 1894 •
Oil on canvas, 81.9 × 107.6 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago
Edward B. Butler Collection, 1911.29

Jacques Adrien Lavieille (1818–1862)

The Reaper from the series *The Labors of the Fields* (after Millet) from the journal *L'Illustration*, 1853 *
Line block and letterpress printing on paper,
15.3 × 8.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Thresher from the series *The Labors of the Fields* (after Millet), published in *L'Illustration*, 1853 *
Line block and letterpress printing on paper,
15.3 × 8.4 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Evening from the series *Four Moments of the Day* (after Millet) in the journal *L'Illustration*, 1873 *
Line block and letterpress printing on paper,
23.8 32.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Evening from the series *Four Moments of the Day* (after Millet) *in the journal L'Illustration*, 1873 *
Line block and letterpress printing on paper,
24 × 32.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Siesta from the series *Four Moments of the Day* (after Millet), 1873 *
Line block and letterpress printing on paper,
23.8 × 32.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Night, from the series *The Four Times of the Day*, n.d. •
Wood engraving, 24.8 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Gift of W. G. Russell Allen

Léon-Augustin Lhermitte (1844–1925)

The Gleaners, 1887
Oil on canvas, 74.9 × 95.9 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art
The George W. Elkins Collection, 1924

Rest, Effect of the Hot Sun, Sleeping Reaper, Mézy, 1898
Pastel on paper, 35 × 44 cm
Private Collection, San Francisco

Sower in Ru Chailly, 1885 *
Black chalk on paper, 45 × 31 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Max Liebermann (1847–1935)

Dutch Lacemaker, 1881
Oil on canvas, 62.5 × 47.5 cm
Hamburger Kunsthalle

Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935)

The Woodcutter, 1912 *
Oil on canvas, 94 × 71.5 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Ownership recognized by agreement with the estate of Kazimir Malevich in 2008

Jean-François Millet (1814–1875)

Self-Portrait, c. 1840–41
Oil on canvas, 63.5 × 47 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Museum purchase with funds donated
by contribution

The Bather, 1846–48
Oil on wood, 18.5 × 24.1 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Gift of R. Horace Gallatin, 1949.1.9

Naked Peasant Girl Sitting on a Bank, 1847–48
Oil on wood, 18 × 19 cm
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und
Kunstbau, Munich
Permanent loan from Christoph Heilmann
Foundation

The Shooting Stars, 1847–48
Oil on panel, 18.7 × 34.5 cm
Amgueddfa Cymru–National Museum Wales,
Cardiff
Bequeathed by Gwendoline Davies, 1951

Seated Nude, 1847–48
Oil on canvas, 25.1 × 18.4 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
The Henry C. and Martha B. Angell Collection

Two Bathers, 1848
Oil on wood, 28 × 19 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Hagar and Ishmael, 1848–49
Oil on canvas, 147 × 236.5 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

The Sower, 1850 *
Oil on canvas, 99.7 × 80 cm
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art, Kofu

Harvesters Resting (Ruth and Boaz), 1850–53
Oil on canvas, 67.3 × 119.7 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Bequest of Mrs. Martin Brimmer

Starry Night, c. 1850–65 •
Oil on canvas, 65.4 × 81.3 cm
Yale University Art Gallery
Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Class of 1913, Fund

The Sower, after 1850 •
Oil on canvas, 105.4 × 85.7 cm
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
19th Century or Earlier Painting Purchase Fund with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Casey and Mr. and Mrs. George L. Craig, Jr., 63.7

Shearing Sheep, 1852–53
Oil on canvas, 40.7 × 24.8 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian Shaw Haughton

Summer, The Gleaners, 1853 •
Oil on canvas, 38.3 × 29.3 cm
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art, Kofu

Waiting (*Tobit and his Wife*), c. 1853–61
Oil on canvas, 83.8 × 121.7 cm
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 30-18

Woman Spinning, c. 1855–60
Oil on panel, 39.1 × 29.5 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts

The Sheepfold, Moonlight, 1856–60
Oil on panel, 45.3 × 63.4 cm
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

The Gleaners, 1857 *
Oil on canvas. 83.8 × 110 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Donation subject to usufruct of Mrs. Pommery

The Angelus, 1857–59
Oil on canvas, 55.5 × 66 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Bequest of Alfred Chauchard, 1910

A Sheepshearer, 1860
Oil on canvas, 165 × 110 cm
Hokugin Galerie Millet, Toyama

Man with a Hoe, 1860–62
Oil on canvas, 81.9 × 100.3 cm
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
85.PA.114

Winter: The Plain of Chailly, 1862
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73 cm
Belvedere, Vienna

The Goose Girl, c. 1863
Oil on canvas, 38 × 46,5 cm
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

In the Auvergne, c. 1866–69
Oil on canvas, 81.5 × 99.9 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago
Potter Palmer Collection, 1922.414

The Pig Killers, 1867–70
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92.7 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Purchased 1978

Spring, between 1868–73 •
Oil on canvas, 86 × 111 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Bequest of Mrs. Frédéric Hartmann, 1887

The Knitting Lesson, 1869
Oil on canvas, 101.3 × 83.2 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Museum Purchase 106:1939

Old House at Nacqueville, c. 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 65 × 82 cm
Private collection

The Peasant Family, 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 110.4 × 81 cm
Amgueddfa Cymru–National Museum Wales, Cardiff
Bequeathed by Margaret Davies, 1963

The Cliffs of Gréville, 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 93.3 × 116.5 cm
Collection Albright–Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Elisabeth H. Gates Fund, 1919

Pasture near Cherbourg (Normandy), 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92.4 cm
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Bequest of Mrs. Erasmus C. Lindley in memory of her father, James J. Hill

Church at Gréville, 1871–74
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73.4 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Haystacks: Autumn, c. 1874
Oil on canvas, 85.1 × 110.2 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Bequest of Lilian S. Timken, 1959 (60.71.12)

Reclining Female Nude, 1845–48 *
Oil pastel on paper, 10 × 17 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon

Two Studies of a Female Nude, c.1846–48 •
Black chalk on beige paper, 24.3 × 15.7 cm
Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du Louvre, Paris

The Lovers, 1846/50 •
Black crayon on buff wove paper with blue fibers, 35.2 × 22.3 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago
The Charles Deering Collection, 1927.4434

Self-Portrait, c. 1847–49 *
Black chalk on paper, 54.5 × 43 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Gift by Mrs. Joanny Benoît Peytel, 1914

Man Harvesting Wheat, c. 1850
Black chalk on paper, 18.7 × 18.7 cm
Private collection

Bust of a Young Nude Girl, c. 1851 *
Charcoal on paper, 19.9 × 16.4 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Gift of Walter Gay, 1913

The Reaper, c. 1852 *
Charcoal on paper, 25 × 17 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The Carder, c. 1854
Black crayon on paper, 31.1 × 26 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William N. Eisendrath Jr. 1920:1981

The Knitting Shepherdess, 1856–57
Pastel on paper, 33.7 × 25.4 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Gift of the J. Lionberger Davis Art Trust 156:1953

The Washerwomen, c. 1857–60
Black crayon on paper, 38.1 × 28.6 cm
Hokugin Galerie Millet, Toyama

Sheep and Shepherd, c. 1857–65
Black chalk on paper, 31.8 × 45.7 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Bequest of Ellis Wainwright, 289:1925

Women Carrying Faggots, ca. 1858
Charcoal and gouache on paper, 34.3 × 27.6 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.671)

Morning Toilette, 1860–62 *
Black Conté crayon and pastel on paper, 37.1 × 25.7 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Gift of Quincy Adams Shaw through Quincy Adams Shaw, Jr., and Mrs. Marian Shaw Haughton

Peasants Digging for Potatoes, 1862–66
Black chalk on paper, 19.5 × 13.5 cm
Private collection

The Flight into Egypt, c. 1864 *
Black crayon on paper, 26.5 × 34 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon

The Flight into Egypt, c. 1864 •
Black and brown Conté crayon, with pen and black ink and traces of black pastel, over gray washes, on cream wove paper, edge-mounted on laminated woodpulp board, 31.7 × 40.7 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago
The Regenstein Collection, 1996.608

The Sower, c.1865 •
Pastel and conté crayon on paper, mounted on wood-pulp board, 47 × 37.5 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hirschel

The Mower, 1866–67
Pastel on paper, 96 × 68 cm
Hiroshima Museum of Art

Landscape, Vichy, c. 1866–67
Pen and ink on paper, 11.3 × 15.5 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Bequest of Gregoire Tarnopol, 1979, and
Gift of Alexander Tarnopol, 1980 (1980.21.14)

Road from Malavaux, near Cusset, 1867 •
Watercolor, pen and brown ink over graphite pencil on paper, 11.2 × 16.2 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Gift of Martin Brimmer

Peasant and Donkey Returning Home at Dusk, 1866–68
Pastel and black chalk on paper, 41 × 50 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

The Cliffs of Gréville, 1871 *
Pastel on paper, 43.5 × 54 cm
Ohara Museum, Kurashiki

The Plain, c. 1868 *
Pastel and black crayon over graphite on paper, 50.1 × 62.2 cm
Private collection
Courtesy of Daniel Katz Ltd., London

Vineyard Laborer Resting, 1869
Pastel and black chalk on paper, 70.5 × 84 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907)

Landscape with Moon, c. 1900
Oil on cardboard, 42 × 55.5 cm
Paula Modersohn-Becker Stiftung, Bremen

Two Girls in Front of Birch Trees, 1905
Oil on cardboard, 55.2 × 35.2 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum
Bequest of Morton D. May, 914:1983

Old Peasant Woman, c. 1905
Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 57.7 cm
Detroit Institute of Arts
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill

Claude Monet (1840–1926)

The Gorge at Varengeville, 1882
Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm
David and Mary Beth Shimmon

Grainstack, 1890–91 *
Oil on canvas, 65 × 92 cm
Private collection

Grainstack in Winter, Misty Weather, 1888–89 *
Oil on canvas, 65 × 92 cm
Private collection

Gorge of the Petit Ailly, Varengeville, 1897 •
Oil on canvas, 65.7 × 92.7 cm
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum
Gift of Ella Milbank Foshay

Angelo Morbelli (1853–1919)

In the Rice Fields, 1901
Oil on canvas, 182.9 × 130.2 cm
Private collection

Edvard Munch (1863–1945)

Woman Looking in the Mirror, 1892 *
Oil on canvas, 92 × 72.5 cm
Private collection

Fertility, 1899–1900
Oil on canvas, 120 × 140 cm
Canica Art Collection, Oslo
On long-term loan to the Van Gogh Museum

Camille Pissarro (1830–1903)

Washerwoman, Study, 1880
Oil on canvas, 73 × 59.1 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nate B. Spingold, 1956 (56.184.1)

Peasant Girl with a Straw Hat, 1881
Oil on canvas, 73.3 × 59.5 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 1970.17.52

Peasants Resting, 1881 •
Oil on canvas, 81.3 × 65.4 cm
Toledo Museum of Art
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.6

Haymaker, 1884 *
Oil on canvas, 73.5 × 60 cm
Collection Pérez Simón, Mexico

Young Peasant at her Toilette, 1888 *
Gouache on linen, 32 × 24 cm
Private collection

Flock of Sheep, Sunset, 1889
Gouache on silk, 20 × 62 cm
Collection Pérez Simón, Mexico

The Sower, 1888 *
Wood engraving on paper, 15.9 × 23.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1881)

The Poor Fisherman, 1881 *
Oil on canvas, 154.7 × 192.5 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Orpheus, 1883
Oil on canvas, 21.5 × 28 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Laurits Andersen Ring (1854–1933)

Harvest, 1886
Pastel on paper, 62 × 47.6 cm
Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr.

Harvest Girl, 1889
Oil on canvas, 120 × 92 cm
Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr.

Willem Roelofs (1822–1897)

The Rainbow, 1875 •
Oil on canvas, 57.7 × 110.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Den Haag, The Hague,
The Netherlands

Félicien Rops (1833–1898)

Satan Sowing Tares, from *Les Sataniques*, 1882
Color aquatint, 30.4 x 21 cm
Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur

Giovanni Segantini (1858–1899)

Moonlight Effect. The Return of the Flock., 1883–84 *
Black and white chalk and charcoal on paper, 78 × 52 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

The Two Mothers, 1884–86
Pastel and gouache on paper, 57 × 87 cm
The Mesdag Collection, The Hague

Ave Maria Crossing the Lake, 1890–92 •
Black Conté crayon and pencil, white highlights, on blue-green rag paperboard, 24.4 × 37.8 cm
Segantini Museum, St. Moritz

The Sower, 1897 •
Conté crayon and black crayon on paper, 59.5 × 51.5 cm
Segantini Museum, St. Moritz

Paul Sérusier (1864–1927)

Breton Girl with a Sickle, 1889
Oil on canvas, 46.1 × 38.4 cm
Private collection

The Seaweed Gatherer, c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 46 × 55 cm
Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields
Samuel Josefowitz Collection of the School of Pont-Aven, through the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc., the Josefowitz Family, Mr. and Mrs. James M. Cornelius, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Betley, Lori and Dan Efroymson, and other Friends of the Museum, 1998.181

Georges Seurat (1859–1891)

Peasant Laboring, 1882–83
Oil on board, 16 × 25 cm
Menard Art Museum, Komaki, Japan

Landscape with Houses, 1881–82
Conté crayon on paper, 24.9 × 31.9 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971
(1972.118.234)

The Barge, c. 1882-83 •
Conté crayon on cream wove paper,
24 × 31 cm
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Gift of Therese Kuhn Straus in memory of
her husband, Herbert N. Straus, Harvard
Class of 1903

Peasants, 1881–84
Conté crayon on paper, 24.8 × 31.6 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot
(1876-1967), 1967 (67.187.34)

Haystacks, c. 1883 *
Black Conté crayon on paper, 24.1 × 32.4 cm
Private collection

The Nursemaid, 1882–83
Black Conté crayon on paper, 30.5 × 23.5 cm
Private collection

Woman Bending, Viewed from Behind, c. 1885
Conté crayon on paper, 31.1 × 24.2 cm
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
Memorial gift from Dr. T. Edward and Tullah
Hanley, Bradford, Pennsylvania

John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)

Noon (after Millet), from scrapbook, 1875
Graphite on paper, 14.9 × 21.9 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950
(50.130.154d)

The Reaper (after Millet), c. 1875
Graphite on paper, 17.5 × 10.2 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950
(50.130.143a)

Jan Toorop (1858–1928)

Broek in Waterland, 1889
Oil on canvas, 68.6 × 76.2 cm
Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields
Gift in memory of Robert S. Ashby by his
family and friends, 2000.156

Resting Peasant, 1909
Oil on panel, 110 × 75 cm
Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen,
The Netherlands
Acquired with support of Vereniging
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Index of Names

Page numbers in **bold** refer to illustrations.

Alexandre, Arsène, 84
Angrand, Charles, 97, 104, **104**, **105**
Antokolsky, Mark, 180
Aurier, Albert, 94

Babcock, William Perkins, 140
Barye, Antoine-Louis, 41
Bastien-Lepage, Jules, 27
Baudelaire, Charles, 41
Bazille, Frédéric, 80, 95, **97**
Bell, Clive, 162
Bergerat, Emile, 94
Bernard, Emile, 104, 106, 108–109, 111, **112**
Bertall, 46, 50, **50**
Blanc, Charles, 97
Blanche, Jacques-Emile, 75, 88
Bock, Théophile de, 120
Bonnemère, Eugène, 37
Brame, Hector, 58, 60
Braque, George, 180
Braun, Adolphe, 62, 140
Braun, Gaston, 62
Breton, Jules, 41, 122
Bruegel the Elder, Pieter, 45, 53, **55**
Bürger, Peter, 31
Burty, Philippe, 30, 56, 66, 74

Caillebotte, Gustave, 74
Castagnary, Jules-Antoine, 41, 46, 50
Cézanne, Paul, 84–88, **84**, **86–87**, 180, 182
Cham (Amedée de Noé), 46, **47**
Chauchard, Alfred, 163
Chèvreville, Lucien-Théophile Langlois de, 32
Clark, T. J., 37, 67
Claus, Emile, 27
Clausen, George, 27, 158
Corot, Jean-Baptiste-Camille, 27, 63, 74, 80, 88, 94, 108, 114, 148, 158, 180
Courbet, Gustave, 27, 31, 41, 46, 63, 88, 93, 114, 158
Cuvelier, Eugène, **31**

Dalí, Gala, 167
Dalí, Salvador, 26, 27, **27**, 162, 166–167, **167**, **168–170**, 171
Daubigny, Charles-François, 88, 124, 148
Daun, Berthold, 171
David, Jacques-Louis, 95
Degas, Edgar, 66, 67, 74–80, **76**, **77**, **78**, 88, 158
Delacroix, Eugène, 27, 30–31, 63, 124, 125, 127, 134, 180
Delaroche, Paul, 32
Delauney, Alfred, **132**, 134
Descubes, A., 67
Dumas, Alexandre, père, 41
Dumollard, Martin, 46
Dumouchel, Bon, 32
Dupré, Jules, 57
Durand-Ruel, Paul, 58, 60, 67, 82, 120
Duranty, Edmond, 67
Dürer, Albrecht, 144
Duret, Théodore, 57, 67, 68

Egger-Lienz, Albin, 162, **178**, 180, **186**
El Greco, 75
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 32
Eudel, Paul, 62, 75

Faure, Jean-Baptiste, 67
Fehr, Hans, 177

Galland, Georg, 171
Gambetta, Léon, 30
Gasquet, Joachim, 88
Gauguin, Paul, 27, 63, 94, 104, 106, **107**, 109, **109**, 111, 114, 125
Gautier, Théophile, 38, 41, 122, 123
Gavet, Emile, 53, 60, 66, 74, 82, 119, 123
Giotto, 180
Gogh, Theo van, 26, 106, 119, 120, 127, 128, 134–135
Gogh, Vincent van, 106, **117–118**, 118–120, **119**, **121**, 122–128, **123**, **125**, **126**, **127**, **128**, **129**, **130**, **131**, **133**, 134, 135, **135**, **136–137**, 166, 171, 174, **176**, 177, 180, 182
Gogh, Willemien van, 134
Gontcharova, Natalia, **179**, 180
Greenberg, Clement, 26
Grubicy de Dragon, Vittore, 153, 164

Haack, Friedrich, 171
Hartmann, Frédéric, 62, 82
Hassam, Childe, 148
Hepp, Alexandre, 70
Herbert, Robert, 103
Hodler, Ferdinand, 162, **176–177**, 180
Homer, 32, 41, 126
Homer, Winslow, **139**, 140, **141–143**, 143
Hüe, Albert, 93
Hunt, William Morris, 140
Huysmans, Joris-Karl, 57, 58, 71

Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique, 74
Inness, George, 144, **146**, **147**, 148
Israëls, Jozef, 123, 150

Jacobsen, Carl, 150
Jeanron, Philippe-Auguste, 41

Kessler, Harry Graf, 174

La Fontaine, Jean de, 41
Lagrange, Léon, 45
Larchevêque, Marie Adeline, 69
Lavieille, Jacques Adrien, **126**, **127**, **130**, **145**
Le Rat, Paul-Edme, **118**, 120, 124
Lee, Vernon (Paget, Violet), 144
Leroy, Louis, 50
Lhermitte, Léon Augustin, 75, **79**, 122, 124
Lichtwark, Alfred, 174
Liebermann, Max, 140, 148, **149**, 150

Mackensen, Fritz, 174
Madsen, Karl, 150
Malevich, Kazimir, 162, 180, **181**, 182
Manet, Edouard, 26, 63, 123
Mantz, Paul, 30, 93, 124
Marier, Adèle (née Moschner), 45
Maris, Jacob, 150
Maris, Matthijs, 150
Maris, Willem, 150
Mathews, Patricia Townley, 94
Mauve, Anton, 123
May, Ernest, 75
Meier-Graefe, Julius, 166, 171, 174, 177, 180

Merson, Olivier, 41
Mesdag, Hendrik Willem, 150
Michelangelo, 38
Millet, Jean-Baptiste, 67
Millet, Jean-François, **2**, **29–30**, **32**, **33**, **34–37**, **38**, **39–40**, **42–45**, **47**, **48–50**, **51–52**, **53**, **54–55**, **56**, **57**, **58–60**, **61–62**, **65–66**, **73**, **75**, **76**, **78**, **80**, **82**, **85–86**, **89**, **91–92**, **96**, **98**, **108**, **110**, **111**, **129**, **131–132**, **135**, **146–147**, **175**, **185**
Millet, Pierre, 31–32, 46, 57
Modersohn, Otto, 174
Modersohn-Becker, Paula, **171–173**, 174, 177
Monet, Claude, 66, 80–84, **81**, **83**, 171
Monticelli, Adolphe, 124
Morbelli, Angelo, 154, **156**, 158
Morisot, Berthe, 66, 88
Munch, Edvard, 162, 166, **166**, **184**
Munkácsy, 148
Muther, Richard, 171, 174

Nadar, 38, **38**
Napoleon III, 31
Nolde, Emil, **176**, 177

Paget, Violet (Lee, Vernon), 144
Péladan, Joséphin, 94
Pelloquet, Théodore, 46
Petit, Francis, 60
Picasso, Pablo, 162, 180, 182, **182**, **183**
Piedagnel, Alexandre, 94
Pissarro, Camille, 56, 67–74, **67**, **68–69**, **70–71**, **72–73**, 84, 88, 106, 124, **185**
Pissarro, Lucien, 71
Poussin, Nicolas, **40**, 41, 88
Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre, 94–95, **96**, 97, **161**, 163–164, **163**

Raffaëlli, Jean-François, 75, 80
Rappard, Anthon van, 122
Redon, Odilon, 93–94, **93**
Rembrandt van Rijn, 144, 174, 180
Renoir, Pierre-Auguste, 66, 71
Rewald, John, 80
Ring, Laurits Andersen, 150, **151–152**, 153
Ritter, William, 154
Rodrigues, Olinde, 31
Roelofs, Willem, **147**, 150
Rood, Ogden, 154
Rops, Félicien, 94, **94**, **95**
Rouart, Hélène, 75
Rouart, Henri, 74, **74**
Rousseau, Jean, 41
Rousseau, Théodore, 56, 63, 93
Rubens, Peter Paul, 180

Sabatier-Ungher, François, 38
Saint-Victor, Paul de, 45, 92–93
Sargent, John Singer, 143–144, **144–145**
Segantini, Giovanni, 140, 153–154, **153**, **155**, **157**, 164, **164**
Séguin, Armand, 106
Sensier, Alfred, 30, 31, 32, 38, 46, 50, 58, 70, 106, 120, 122, 123, 140, 148, 153-154, **154**, 162
Sérusier, Paul, 111, **111**, **113**, 114, **115**
Seurat, Georges, 97, **99–103**, 103, 171
Shakespeare, William, 32
Shaw, Quincy Adams, 143
Sickert, Walter, 74, 158, **158**
Silvestre, Théophile, 58
Sisley, Alfred, 66

Thiébault-Sisson, François, 153
Thoré, Théophile, 31, 126
Tillot, Charles, 58, 75
Titian, 48
Toorop, Jan, 162, 164, **164–165**, 166
Troyon, Constant, 148
Tschudi, Hugo von, 150, 174
Velde, Henry Van de, 150, **150**
Verhaeren, Emile, 150
Virgil, 32, 41

Wheelwright, Edward, 57
Whistler, James Abbott McNeill, 148
Wolff, Albert, 75, 80

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Elke Walford: 154
François Jay: 84
Frédéric Jaulmes: 90
Gary Mamay: 148
Getty's Open Content Program: 26
Hugo Maertens: 155
Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt: 3, 127, 150
Nelson-Atkins Media Services / John Lamberton: 25
NGC: 49, 171
Ole Haupt: 23
President and Fellows of Harvard College: 72, 93
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski : 52, 64, 81, 89, 139, 165
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Jean Schormans: 22
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Jean-Gilles Berizzi: 109
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Michel Urtado: 178
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Stéphane Maréchalle: 48
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Thierry Le Mage: 13, 79
RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Tony Querrec: 1, 62, 91, 166
Salvador Dalí, Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2019: 172, 173
SIK-ISEA, Zürich / Philipp Hitz: 181
The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource / Scala, Florence: 145, 146
The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence: 174, 187

Illustrations

p. 9: detail of 190
p. 10: detail of 18
p. 11: detail of 112
p. 12: detail of 46
p. 13: detail of 71
p. 14: detail of 123
p. 15: detail of 40
p. 16: detail of 106
p. 17: detail of 81
p. 18: detail of 175
p. 19: detail of 149
p. 20: detail of 22
p. 21: detail of 161
p. 22: detail of 26
p. 23: detail of 186
p. 24: detail of 3
p. 25: detail of 172

About the Authors

Nienke Bakker is Senior Curator of Paintings at the Van Gogh Museum. She was a member of the editorial team of the web version of Van Gogh's complete correspondence, www.vangoghletters.org (2009), the six-volume publication *Vincent van Gogh – The Letters. The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition* (2009) and the anthology *Ever Yours: The Essential Letters* (2014). She has curated several exhibitions on Vincent van Gogh and late nineteenth-century art, including *Van Gogh's Letters* (2009), *Van Gogh at Work* (2013), *Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh: Impressions of Landscape* (2016), *On the Verge of Insanity: Van Gogh and his Illness* (2016), and *Van Gogh & Japan* (2018).

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Simon Kelly is Curator and Head of Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. He has organized numerous exhibitions on art from the nineteenth century to the present day, and published a large number of books and articles on nineteenth and early twentieth-century French art, focusing on the Barbizon School, Impressionism, and the art market. He co-authored *Impressionist France: Visions of Nation from Le Gray to Monet* (2014), and *Degas, Impressionism and the Paris Millinery Trade* (2017). Kelly has a PhD from the University of Oxford where he also taught art history. He is currently completing a book on Théodore Rousseau.

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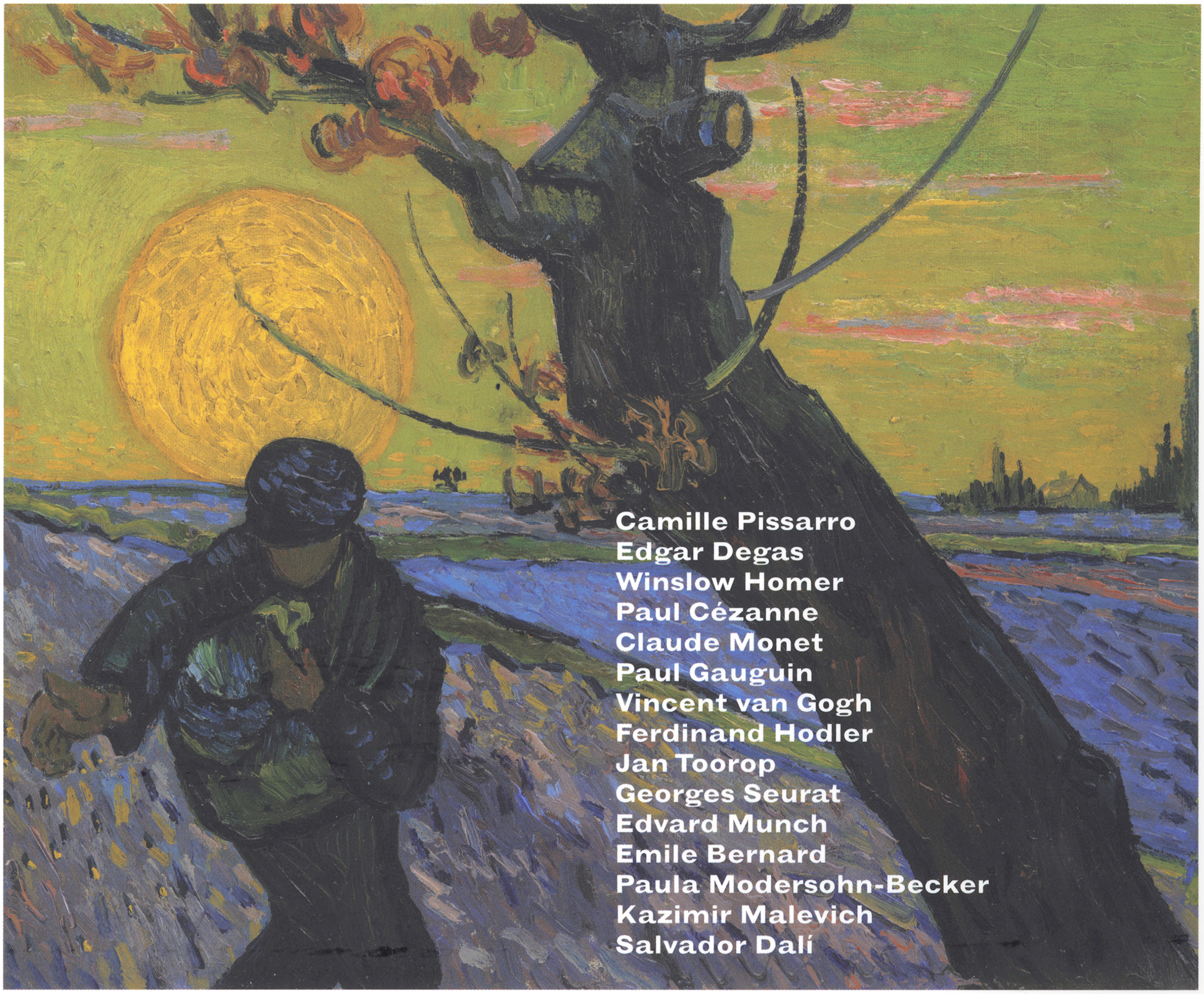
Maite van Dijk
Simon Kelly



Camille Pissarro
Edgar Degas
Winslow Homer
Paul Cézanne
Claude Monet
Paul Gauguin
Vincent van Gogh
Ferdinand Hodler
Jan Toorop
Georges Seurat
Edvard Munch
Emile Bernard
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Kazimir Malevich
Salvador Dalí

Millet
and Modern Art From Van Gogh to Dalí

During his lifetime, the French artist Jean-François Millet (1814–1875) was frequently criticized for his peasant paintings. Traditionalists objected to his raw, radical technique and the sharp social critique they perceived in his work. Shortly after his death, however, Millet was embraced as a national hero who had captured the French countryside in all its glory. The artist's fame extended from Europe to America and Russia, and his modern style and sympathetic depiction of peasant life remained a source of inspiration until well into the twentieth century. This publication sets Millet's work in the context of the figures he inspired: artists including Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Giovanni Segantini, Winslow Homer, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Kazimir Malevich, Edvard Munch, and Salvador Dalí.

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